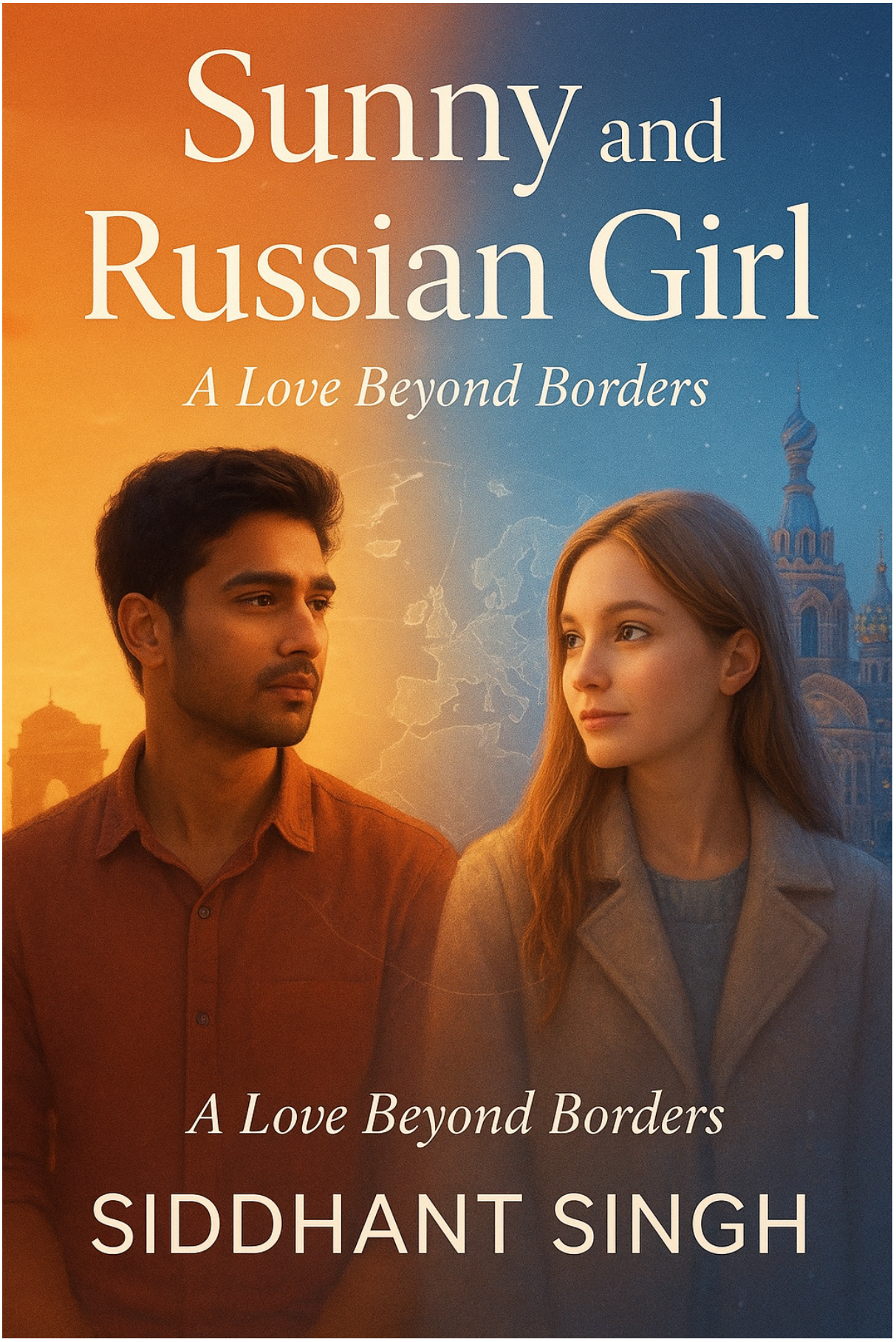
Sunny and Russian Girl
A Love Beyond Borders
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SIDDHANT SINGH

Description: Sunny and the Russian Girl is a contemporary romance novel that follows the emotional journey of Sunny Singh, a 21-year-old BBA student from Delhi, who feels disconnected from his traditional Indian upbringing and disillusioned by superficial social norms . His life changes when he connects with Anastasia, a young woman from Saint Petersburg, Russia, through an international dating app, sparking a deep, cross-cultural relationship built on honesty, emotional intimacy, and shared dreams . As their bond grows through late-night chats, video calls, and mutual support, they face intense challenges, including family disapproval, cultural differences, and the physical distance between India and Russia . The story explores themes of love beyond borders, the clash between modern individualism and traditional values, and the courage required to follow one's heart against societal expectations . Ultimately, it is a tale of resilience, identity, and the transformative power of a connection that transcends geography and culture .
Genre: Contemporary Romance

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Chapter 1: Disillusioned in Delhi

Sunny Singh stared out the grimy window of the Delhi Metro, the city's chaotic skyline blurring past like a half-forgotten dream. At 21, he was supposed to be on the cusp of something exciting—finishing his BBA degree, stepping into the corporate world his parents had meticulously planned for him. But all he felt was a hollow ache, a disconnection that gnawed at him like the relentless summer heat.

The train rattled to a stop at Rajiv Chowk, and a flood of commuters surged in, their bodies pressing against one another in a sweaty, impersonal dance. Sunny clutched his backpack tighter, avoiding eye contact with the suited businessmen barking into their phones and the college girls giggling over selfies. He wondered if any of them felt the same suffocation he did—the weight of expectations from a family that traced its roots back to Punjab, where tradition wasn't just heritage; it was law.

Back home in South Delhi, his parents' apartment was a shrine to stability. His father, a mid-level bank manager, preached the gospel of hard work and arranged marriages over dinner every night. "Beta, focus on your studies. We'll find you a nice girl from a good family," he'd say, his voice laced with the unspoken assumption that Sunny's life was already mapped out. His mother, ever the enforcer, nodded along, her hands busy with chapatis, her eyes scanning him for any sign of rebellion.

But Sunny craved more. He was tired of the superficial chats at college parties, where conversations revolved around Bollywood gossip and cricket scores. Tired of the cultural scripts that dictated he should marry within his community, settle into a 9-to-5 job, and produce heirs to carry on the Singh legacy. What about his dreams? The ones that whispered of adventure, of connections that went deeper than caste or cuisine?

As the metro doors slid open at his stop, Sunny stepped into the bustling streets of Saket. The air was thick with the scent of street food—chaat vendors hawking spicy treats, auto-rickshaws honking impatiently. He walked past gleaming malls filled with brands that

promised modernity but delivered the same old conformity. His phone buzzed in his pocket—a reminder from his college group chat about another "networking" event, code for schmoozing with future bosses.
That night, alone in his room, Sunny scrolled through his phone aimlessly. Social media feeds were a parade of filtered lives: friends posing with luxury cars, cousins announcing engagements to "suitable" matches. He felt like an outsider in his own world. On a whim, he downloaded an international dating app, the kind advertised with glossy images of cross-continental romances. "Why not?" he muttered to himself. It was just curiosity, a harmless escape from the disillusionment that clung to him like Delhi's smog.
Little did he know, that simple tap would change everything.

Chapter 2: The Weight of Expectations

Sunny Singh slumped into the worn armchair in the living room, the faint aroma of his mother's evening chai wafting from the kitchen. The apartment in South Delhi was a cocoon of predictability—walls adorned with framed photos of family gatherings, a ticking clock that seemed to count down to his inevitable future, and the constant hum of the ceiling fan stirring the humid air. It was Friday night, and like clockwork, the family had gathered for what his father called "quality time," but what Sunny knew as an interrogation disguised as dinner.
"Sunny beta, how was college today?" His mother, Priya, asked as she set down a plate of steaming aloo parathas. Her sari was impeccably draped, her bindi a perfect red dot on her forehead, a symbol of the traditional life she embodied. She was the heart of the home, but her love came wrapped in layers of concern that often felt like chains.
"Fine, Ma," Sunny replied, forcing a smile as he tore into a paratha. "Just the usual lectures on business ethics and marketing strategies." He avoided her gaze, knowing it would probe deeper, searching for the cracks in his facade.
His father, Rajinder, adjusted his glasses and leaned forward from the sofa, newspaper folded neatly beside him. A man of few words but heavy expectations, he had risen from a small-town clerk to a respected bank manager through sheer grit. "Usual? Beta, at your age, I was already interning at the bank. You need to think about internships. I've spoken to Mr. Gupta at the office—he can get you a spot in finance. Secure your future early."
Sunny's stomach twisted. Finance? The word alone conjured images of endless spreadsheets and fluorescent-lit cubicles, a far cry from the vague yearnings he harbored for something more creative, more alive. "Dad, I'm only in my final year. There's time—"
"Time?" Rajinder's voice sharpened, echoing the weight he carried from his own youth. "Time is a luxury we didn't have. Your grandparents sacrificed everything to get us here. Punjab to Delhi wasn't easy. We expect you to honor that. Study hard, get a good job, marry a nice Punjabi girl. That's the path."
The words hung in the air like a decree. Sunny glanced at his younger sister, Simran, who was buried in her phone at the table, earbuds in, pretending not to listen. At 18, she was already fielding subtle hints about "suitable alliances" from relatives. The Singh family tree was a web of arranged marriages, successful but loveless in Sunny's eyes—unions based on horoscopes and family status, not hearts.
His mother chimed in, her tone softer but no less insistent. "Yes, beta. Look at your cousin Ravi. He married that girl from Chandigarh last year—same community, same values. Now they're expecting. Stability, that's what matters. Not these modern apps and flings you kids talk about."

Sunny's cheeks burned. Did they know about the dating app he'd downloaded last night? No, impossible. But the mention hit too close. He'd spent hours scrolling through profiles after lights out, mesmerized by faces from far-off places—Europe, America, even Russia. It was an escape, a window to worlds unbound by caste or parental approval. But guilt gnawed at him; betraying expectations felt like betraying his blood.
As dinner wrapped up, Rajinder retired to watch the news, muttering about stock markets, while Priya cleared the plates. Sunny excused himself to his room, the door clicking shut behind him like a barrier against the world outside. He flopped onto his bed, staring at the ceiling cracks that mirrored his fractured thoughts. The weight of it all—family legacy, cultural norms, the unspoken rule that love was a transaction—pressed down on his chest.
His phone lit up with a notification from the app. A new match? Heart racing, he opened it, the screen glowing in the dim light. There she was: Anastasia from Saint Petersburg, her profile picture a candid shot in snowy streets, blue eyes sparkling with a freedom he envied. "Looking for genuine connections," her bio read. No mention of caste or family approval. Just honesty.
For the first time that day, the weight lifted, if only a little.

Chapter 3: Late-Night Scrolling

The clock on Sunny's nightstand glowed 1:47 AM, casting a faint blue hue across his cluttered room. Posters of Bollywood stars peeled at the edges on the walls, remnants of a teenage fandom he'd outgrown, much like the stack of unread business textbooks piled on his desk. The fan whirred lazily overhead, doing little to dispel the sticky Delhi night air that seeped through the cracked window. Outside, the occasional honk of a late-night taxi pierced the silence, a reminder that the city never truly slept—much like Sunny these days.

He lay on his bed, propped up against a mound of pillows, his phone screen the only source of light in the darkness. The international dating app was open, its interface a kaleidoscope of possibilities that felt worlds away from the rigid script of his life. Since the match notification with Anastasia had popped up earlier that evening, he hadn't been able to shake it off. It was silly, he told himself—a random algorithm connecting two strangers across continents. But in the quiet hours when the weight of his parents' expectations pressed heaviest, scrolling through the app felt like rebellion, a secret portal to freedom.

Sunny swiped idly at first, profiles blurring into one another. A French artist in Paris, her bio filled with poetic musings about love and croissants. A Canadian teacher in Toronto, seeking someone to share hikes and Tim Hortons runs. An Australian surfer in Sydney, all beach vibes and adventure. Each one stirred a flicker of envy in him—lives unburdened by the invisible threads of family honor and cultural duty. "What would it be like," he wondered, "to just pack a bag and go? No questions, no judgments?"

But his thumb kept circling back to Anastasia's profile. He tapped it open again, zooming in on her photo. She stood against a backdrop of snow-dusted spires, probably the famous Saint Isaac's Cathedral he'd vaguely remembered from a history class. Her blonde hair peeked out from under a woolen hat, and her smile was genuine, not the posed perfection of Instagram influencers. Age: 20. Location: Saint Petersburg, Russia. Interests: Literature, ballet, exploring hidden cafes. "Not looking for games," her bio read. "Real talks, real feelings. Let's see where words take us."

Sunny scrolled through her additional photos—a candid shot of her laughing with friends at a frozen Neva River, another of her curled up with a book in what looked like a cozy apartment. No filters, no glamour poses. Just authenticity that pulled at him like a magnet. He imagined her voice, accented and soft, sharing stories of Russian winters while he described the chaos of Delhi monsoons. It was fantasy, of course, but in the dead of night, fantasies felt tangible.

His heart quickened as he hovered over the message button. What could he even say? "Hi, I'm from India and my life feels like a scripted movie—want to rewrite it with me?" Too cheesy. Too desperate. He closed the app, then reopened it seconds later, the cycle of hesitation fueling his insomnia. The family was asleep down the hall, oblivious to his digital wanderings. If they knew, the lectures would be endless: "Focus on real life, beta. These apps are for time-wasters."

Yet, as the minutes ticked toward 3 AM, Sunny felt a spark of defiance. This wasn't just scrolling anymore; it was a quiet act of claiming his own story. With a deep breath, he began typing a message, simple and honest, hoping it would bridge the vast distance between their worlds.

Chapter 4: A Profile from Afar

Sunny’s fingers hovered over the keyboard, the glow of his phone casting shadows across his face in the pre-dawn stillness of his South Delhi bedroom. The message he'd drafted to Anastasia sat unsent, each word weighed down by self-doubt. "Hey, I'm Sunny from Delhi. Your profile caught my eye—love how you seem so real. Want to chat about books or maybe life in Russia?" It felt too plain, too vulnerable, but anything more felt like a lie. He hit send before he could overthink it further, his heart thudding like the bass of a street festival outside.

He tossed the phone onto his bed, expecting nothing. She was 4,000 miles away in Saint Petersburg, probably asleep under a blanket of Russian snow. Why would she reply to a random guy from India? But curiosity gnawed at him, and he reopened her profile, studying it like a treasure map. Her photos painted a life so different from his: one of her bundled in a scarf, sipping coffee at a quaint cafe; another of her standing in front of a graffiti-covered wall, her expression playful yet introspective. Her bio mentioned Dostoevsky and Tchaikovsky, names Sunny vaguely recalled from a world literature elective he’d taken to avoid another finance course.

Anastasia’s world felt like a parallel universe. No mention of family pressures or societal scripts in her profile—just a quiet confidence in her own path. Sunny envied that freedom. His own profile was a careful balancing act: a photo of him at a friend’s Holi party, colors streaking his grin to seem fun but not reckless; another at a temple with his family, to signal "good values." His bio was generic—"BBA student, love music and exploring new ideas"—because anything too bold might leak back to his parents’ social circle.

The phone vibrated, jolting him upright. A notification from the app. Anastasia had replied. His breath caught as he opened the message: "Hi Sunny! Thanks for the sweet words. I’m

always up for a good chat—Delhi sounds so vibrant! What's it like there? And what's a book you can't put down?" Simple, warm, curious. No judgment, no expectations. Just an invitation to connect.

Sunny's lips curved into a smile, the first genuine one in days. He glanced at the clock—4:12 AM. Sleep was a lost cause now. He typed back, describing the chaos of Delhi's markets, the way monsoon rains turned streets into rivers, and admitted he'd recently reread *The Alchemist* because it made him dream of chasing his own destiny. He hesitated, then added, "What's Saint Petersburg like? I've only seen it in pictures—snow and golden domes. Is it as magical as it looks?"

As he hit send, the weight of the night shifted. The distance between Delhi and Saint Petersburg felt a little smaller, and for the first time, Sunny sensed a crack in the walls of his disillusioned world. Somewhere, a girl named Anastasia was reading his words, and that alone felt like the start of something extraordinary.

Chapter 5: First Message Sent

The moment Sunny hit send, a rush of adrenaline surged through him, as if he'd just leapt off a cliff into the unknown. His message to Anastasia—carefully crafted, earnest, and tinged with hope—felt like a tiny rebellion against the suffocating script of his life. He stared at his phone screen, the app's chat window now a lifeline to a stranger in Saint Petersburg. The Delhi dawn was creeping in, painting his room in soft grays, but sleep was impossible. His mind raced with possibilities, doubts, and a flicker of excitement he hadn't felt in months.

He reread his message: "Delhi's a wild mix—crowded markets, spicy chaat stalls, and monsoons that flood everything. I loved *The Alchemist* for its take on chasing dreams. What's Saint Petersburg like? Is it as magical as the pictures with snow and golden domes?" It was honest, maybe too honest, but that was the point. No posturing, no pretending to be the perfect son or the ambitious BBA student. Just Sunny, reaching across continents for something real.

He set the phone down, trying to distract himself with the hum of the city waking up outside—street vendors calling out, the distant rumble of early traffic. But his eyes kept darting back to the screen, checking for the telltale dots of a reply. What if she didn't respond? What if she thought his message was dull, or worse, desperate? The app was a gamble, a digital lottery where most connections fizzled out in a day. Yet something about Anastasia's profile—her candid smile, her love for literature and hidden cafes—made him believe she might be different.

Minutes stretched into an eternity. Sunny got up, splashed cold water on his face, and paced his room, the floorboards creaking under his bare feet. He glanced at the family photo on his desk—his parents beaming at a cousin's wedding, Simran rolling her eyes in the background. If they knew he was messaging a Russian girl at 5 AM, they'd probably stage an intervention. "Focus on your studies, beta," his father's voice echoed in his head. "No distractions."

His phone buzzed, and Sunny lunged for it, nearly knocking over a glass of water. A new message from Anastasia: “Sunny, you make Delhi sound alive! I can almost smell the chaat. Saint Petersburg is beautiful—snow makes everything quiet, like a fairytale, but it’s the little things, like warm pelmeni in a cozy cafe, that feel magical. *The Alchemist* is amazing! What’s your dream to chase?” Her words were warm, inviting, like a door cracked open to her world.

Sunny’s heart raced as he typed a reply, his fingers clumsy with excitement. “Pelmeni sounds like our momos—spicy dumplings we devour here. My dream? Honestly, I’m still figuring it out. I want something bigger than what’s planned for me. What’s yours?” He hit send, a grin spreading across his face. The weight of expectations—his parents, his culture, his predictable future—felt lighter, if only for a moment. Somewhere in the snowy streets of Russia, Anastasia was reading his words, and that connection, fragile as it was, felt like the first step toward something uncharted.

Chapter 6: Anastasia's Reply

Sunny’s phone buzzed on his desk, the sound cutting through the early morning quiet of his South Delhi room. It was 5:45 AM, and the city was stirring outside—chai vendors clinking glasses, the faint call of a muezzin blending with the honks of early commuters. He grabbed the phone, his pulse quickening as he saw Anastasia’s name on the screen. Her reply had come faster than he’d expected, and the thrill of it made his fingers tremble as he opened the message.

“Pelmeni and momos—maybe we’re not so different! 😊 I love that you’re searching for something bigger. My dream? To travel, write stories inspired by people I meet, and live without fear of ‘what will people say.’ Saint Petersburg is my heart, but it can feel small when you want more. What’s the one thing you’d do if no one was watching?”

Her words were like a breeze from a world Sunny could barely imagine—open, unguarded, and brimming with curiosity. He pictured her typing in a cozy Russian apartment, maybe wrapped in a blanket, the glow of her phone lighting up her blue eyes. The phrase “what will people say” hit him hard; it was the unspoken mantra of his life, dictating everything from his career path to whom he could love. Anastasia’s casual rejection of it felt revolutionary.

He leaned back against his pillows, the fan above creaking as it spun. His room, cluttered with textbooks and family expectations, seemed to shrink around him. He wanted to reply with the same fearless honesty, but doubt crept in. What *would* he do if no one was watching? Quit BBA for something creative, like filmmaking? Travel to places like Saint Petersburg, where snow softened the edges of life? Love someone his parents would never approve of? The thoughts felt dangerous, exhilarating.

Sunny typed slowly, choosing each word with care. “Your dream sounds amazing—writing stories from all over would be so free. If no one was watching… I’d probably ditch the ‘safe’ path and try something crazy, like making films or traveling with no plan. Never thought about it this clearly before. What’s one place you’d go if you could pick anywhere?”

He hesitated, rereading his message. It was the most honest he'd been in years, even if it was to a stranger half a world away. The app's chat felt like a safe haven, a space where he could be the Sunny who dreamed beyond Delhi's borders. He hit send, his heart lighter but racing with the fear of being seen—really seen—for the first time.

As he waited for her reply, he scrolled back to her profile, lingering on a photo of her standing by a frozen canal, her scarf fluttering in the wind. Saint Petersburg seemed like a dreamscape, so far from the dusty chaos of Delhi. Yet her question had cracked something open in him, a longing he'd buried under years of "beta, do this" and "beta, don't do that." Whatever came next, Anastasia's reply had already shifted something inside him, like the first ripple in a still pond.

Chapter 7: Breaking the Ice

The morning sun filtered through the faded curtains of Sunny's room, casting dappled light across his bed as he stared at his phone. It was nearing 7 AM, and the sounds of South Delhi waking up—clattering utensils from his mother's kitchen, the distant drone of a neighbor's TV—felt like background noise to the world unfolding in his chat with Anastasia. Her latest message, sent minutes ago, glowed on the screen: "Films? That's so cool, Sunny! I'd love to see a story through your eyes. If I could go anywhere, maybe Iceland—those northern lights feel like magic. Where would you go? And what kind of film would you make?"

Her words were a spark, igniting a warmth he hadn't felt in ages. She didn't dismiss his half-formed dream or question its practicality, unlike the voices in his life that preached stability over passion. He could almost hear her voice, accented and curious, reaching across the 4,000 miles between them. The idea of Iceland, with its alien landscapes and dancing skies, made Delhi's predictable chaos feel even smaller.

Sunny sat up, rubbing sleep from his eyes, and typed back, his fingers moving faster now, emboldened by her openness. "Iceland sounds unreal! I'd probably pick Japan—temples, neon cities, all that contrast. My film? Maybe something about people stuck between who they are and who they're expected to be. Sounds cheesy, I know. 😅 What kind of stories would you write?" He hit send, a grin tugging at his lips. The chat was starting to feel like a conversation with an old friend, not a stranger he'd matched with hours ago.

He stood and stretched, catching his reflection in the small mirror above his desk. Messy hair, tired eyes, but a hint of a smile he barely recognized. The weight of last night's disillusionment lingered, but it was lighter now, diluted by the thrill of this connection. He wondered what Anastasia was doing—maybe sipping tea in a Saint Petersburg cafe, her phone buzzing with his message. Did she feel the same spark, or was this just another chat for her?

A knock on his door snapped him back. "Sunny, breakfast!" his mother called, her voice carrying the usual mix of affection and expectation. He shoved his phone into his pocket, the app still open, and headed to the dining table where his family waited. His father was already buried in the morning paper, muttering about rising fuel prices, while Simran scrolled through her phone, probably dodging their mother's questions about college applications.

“Beta, you look tired,” Priya said, sliding a plate of poha toward him. “Studying late again?”

“Yeah, something like that,” Sunny mumbled, avoiding her gaze. The lie was easier than explaining he’d been up all night messaging a Russian girl who made him question everything. As he ate, his phone buzzed in his pocket—another notification. His heart skipped, but he forced himself to stay calm, nodding along to his father’s lecture about internship deadlines.

Back in his room after breakfast, he opened Anastasia’s reply: “Japan! I can see you in Tokyo’s lights. Your film idea isn’t cheesy—it’s real. I’d write stories about people finding courage to break free, maybe a girl in Russia who dreams too big for her small town. 😊 What’s one thing in Delhi you’d show me if I visited?” The question caught him off guard, painting a vivid image of her walking through his city, her blue eyes wide at the chaos of Chandni Chowk or the serenity of Lodhi Gardens.

Sunny leaned back, the ice between them melting with every message. He typed, “I’d take you to Old Delhi—narrow lanes, spicy kebabs, and history in every corner. What’s one spot in Saint Petersburg you’d show me?” As he sent it, the distance between their worlds felt less like a barrier and more like a bridge they were building together, word by word.

Chapter 8: Shared Laughs Across Time Zones

Sunny sat cross-legged on his bed, the late morning light streaming through his window, painting golden streaks across the faded posters on his walls. It was Saturday, and the usual hum of South Delhi—blaring horns, vendors shouting—was softened by the weekend’s slower pace. His phone, now a lifeline to a world beyond his family’s expectations, buzzed with Anastasia’s latest message. It had arrived while he was dodging his mother’s questions about his plans for the day, her eyes narrowing when he mentioned “studying” instead of socializing with “suitable” family friends.

He opened the app, heart racing as he read her reply: “Old Delhi sounds like a dream—kebabs and chaos! I’d show you the Peterhof Palace fountains—they dance like they’re alive. 😊 Okay, random question: what’s the funniest thing you’ve seen in Delhi lately?” Her playful tone, even in text, felt like a burst of fresh air, cutting through the stale weight of his routine.

Sunny chuckled, picturing her at the grand Peterhof, her scarf fluttering as she marveled at fountains. He leaned back, memories of Delhi’s quirks flooding in. He typed, “Last week, I saw a monkey steal a guy’s ice cream right outside a metro station—full-on chase, like a Bollywood comedy! What’s the funniest thing you’ve seen in Saint Petersburg?” He hit send, grinning at the thought of her laughing thousands of miles away.

The chat had become a rhythm now, messages flowing despite the five-and-a-half-hour time difference. It was early morning in Saint Petersburg, and Sunny imagined Anastasia curled up with coffee, her phone glowing as she typed. Her reply came quickly: “Haha, a monkey thief? Amazing! Okay, last month, I saw a guy in a bear costume roller-skating down Nevsky Prospekt, handing out balloons. Total chaos! 😄 What’s the weirdest food you’ve tried in

Delhi?” The image of a bear on roller skates made Sunny laugh out loud, startling his sister Simran, who was passing by his open door.

“Laughing at your phone now?” she teased, leaning against the doorframe, her earbuds dangling. “What’s got you so happy, bhai?”

“Nothing,” Sunny said quickly, shoving his phone under a pillow. Simran raised an eyebrow but didn’t push, wandering off to her room. He knew she’d tell their parents if she caught wind of the app—another lecture about “distractions” was the last thing he needed.

Alone again, Sunny typed back, “Bear on roller skates wins! Weirdest food? Probably brain curry at a hole-in-the-wall in Old Delhi—tastes better than it sounds. You? What’s the strangest Russian dish you’ve had?” He sent it, feeling a lightness he hadn’t in weeks. The shared laughs, the silly questions, were building something intangible but real—a connection that didn’t care about borders or time zones.

As he waited for her reply, he scrolled through their chat, rereading her words about Peterhof and her dream to write stories. Each message chipped away at the isolation he’d felt for so long, trapped between his parents’ expectations and his own restless heart. His phone buzzed again: “Brain curry?! You’re brave! I tried jellied fish once—looked like a science experiment, tasted worse. 😅 If you could make one Delhi moment a scene in your film, what would it be?”

Sunny leaned back, the question sparking his imagination. For the first time, he wasn’t just surviving Delhi’s chaos—he was seeing it through her eyes, and it felt like the start of a story they were writing together, one laugh at a time.

Chapter 9: Cultural Curiosities

Sunny sprawled across his bed, the late afternoon sun casting long shadows through his South Delhi room. The air was thick with the scent of his mother’s cooking—daal simmering in the kitchen, a reminder of the family dinner looming. His phone, now a secret portal to Anastasia, buzzed with her latest message. Their chat had evolved from playful banter to something deeper, each question peeling back layers of their worlds. He opened her reply, sent from Saint Petersburg’s early afternoon: “A Delhi moment in a film? That’s tough! Maybe the monkey chase—it’s so alive! 😄 Jellied fish was my food nightmare, but in Russia, we also have kvass—fermented rye drink. Sounds weird, tastes like tangy bread. What’s a Delhi dish that surprises outsiders?”

Her curiosity about his world made Sunny’s chest tighten with a mix of pride and longing. He could almost see her, maybe bundled in a sweater, sipping tea by a frosty window, eager to learn about a city she’d never seen. He typed back, “Kvass sounds wild! In Delhi, maybe golgappa—crispy hollow balls filled with spicy water you gulp in one go. Tourists either love it or panic! 😅 What’s a Russian tradition you love, even if it seems odd to others?” He hit send, picturing her reaction to the chaotic joy of a golgappa stall.

As he waited, Sunny’s mind wandered to the cultural chasm between them. In Delhi, his life was bound by rituals—morning prayers at the family’s small puja corner, festivals dictated by

lunar calendars, and the unspoken rule of marrying within the community. Anastasia's messages hinted at a different rhythm: ballet performances, Orthodox Christmas, and a freedom to chase personal dreams over family duty. The contrast fascinated him, but it also sparked a quiet fear—could two worlds so different ever truly align?

His phone buzzed. "Golgappa sounds like a flavor explosion! I'd probably spill it everywhere. 😄 A Russian tradition? Maybe banya—saunas where you sweat, then jump into icy water. Sounds crazy, but it's bonding. What's a Delhi tradition you'd show me?" Sunny grinned, imagining her braving a banya's extremes. He typed, "Banya sounds intense! I'd show you Diwali—lights everywhere, sweets, and fireworks that light up the sky. It's loud but magical. What's a Saint Petersburg festival like?"

The exchange felt like a cultural dance, each message a step toward understanding. But as Sunny typed, his mother's voice called from the kitchen, "Sunny, come help with dinner!" He sighed, pocketing his phone. At the dining table, his father was already discussing a colleague's daughter—"a good Punjabi girl, perfect for marriage." Sunny nodded absently, his mind still on Anastasia's world of icy plunges and glittering fountains.

Later, back in his room, her reply waited: "Diwali sounds like pure joy! Here, we have White Nights—summer when the sun barely sets, and the city parties under endless twilight. What's one Delhi custom you wish you could skip?" The question stung. Sunny hesitated, then typed, "Sometimes I wish I could skip the pressure to follow the 'right' path—marriage, job, all planned out. Do you ever feel that in Russia?" It was his boldest message yet, a glimpse into the weight he carried.

As he sent it, the gap between Delhi and Saint Petersburg felt both vast and surmountable. Their shared curiosities were weaving a thread across cultures, fragile but vibrant, and Sunny couldn't shake the feeling that this connection was about to challenge everything he'd been taught to accept.

Chapter 10: The Spark Ignites

The evening air in South Delhi was heavy with the scent of jasmine and diesel, a familiar blend that clung to the streets outside Sunny's window. It was just past 6 PM, and the Singh household was settling into its Saturday routine—his mother humming a devotional song in the kitchen, his father flipping through cricket highlights on TV, and Simran texting friends from her room. Sunny, however, was worlds away, his phone a glowing tether to Anastasia in Saint Petersburg, where it was mid-afternoon. Her latest message, sent minutes ago, pulsed with a vulnerability that mirrored his own: "Pressure to follow the 'right' path? Oh, yes. In Russia, it's not so direct, but everyone expects you to settle—job, family, no risks. I want to write, travel, but my parents think it's childish. What's the 'right' path you're supposed to follow, Sunny?"

Her words hit like a spark, igniting something deep within him. For the first time, someone wasn't just asking about his life—they were *seeing* it, the invisible chains of expectation he'd never dared name aloud. He leaned against his headboard, the fan's lazy spin doing little to cool the warmth spreading through his chest. He typed, fingers trembling with a mix of nerves and exhilaration: "For me, it's BBA, a bank job like my dad, and an arranged

marriage to a ‘good Punjabi girl.’ But I want… more. Maybe tell stories, see the world like you. What would you write about if you could start today?” He hit send, his heart racing as if he’d confessed a secret to the universe.

The chat had become a sanctuary, a space where he could shed the weight of Delhi’s norms and be the Sunny who dreamed of Japan’s neon lights and filmmaking. Anastasia’s replies, always thoughtful, felt like a mirror reflecting his own restless heart. He imagined her in Saint Petersburg, maybe strolling along a canal, her phone buzzing with his words. Did she feel this spark too, this electric pull that made the distance between them seem irrelevant?

His phone buzzed, and he opened her message eagerly: “That sounds so heavy, Sunny. I’d write about people like us—caught between duty and dreams, finding courage to choose themselves. If I started today, maybe a story about a girl who leaves Russia for love or adventure. 😊 What’s your film’s story—one sentence?” The question was playful but piercing, urging him to crystallize his vague ambitions.

Sunny grinned, the spark now a flame. He typed, “A guy in Delhi breaks free from tradition to chase a dream he can’t yet name, finding love along the way.” He paused, then added, “Too dramatic? 😅 What’s one adventure you’d chase if you could leave tomorrow?” Sending it felt like stepping off a ledge, thrilling and terrifying. Her dreams, her questions, were pulling him toward a version of himself he’d only glimpsed before.

As he waited, his mother’s voice broke through, “Sunny, dinner in ten minutes!” He barely registered it, his mind tangled in thoughts of Anastasia’s world—White Nights, banyas, and her fearless desire to write. The spark between them wasn’t just curiosity anymore; it was a growing flame, fed by shared defiance and dreams that refused to be boxed in. For the first time, Sunny felt like his life might not be a script written by someone else—and that thought alone was enough to keep him typing into the night.

Chapter 11: Midnight Confessions

The clock on Sunny’s nightstand blinked 12:03 AM, its soft glow the only light in his South Delhi room save for the faint shimmer of his phone screen. The city outside had quieted, the usual cacophony of horns and vendors replaced by the occasional bark of a stray dog. His family was asleep, the apartment silent except for the faint creak of the ceiling fan. Sunny lay on his bed, propped against pillows, his phone warm from hours of use. The chat with Anastasia had become a nightly ritual, each message pulling him deeper into a world where he could speak truths he’d never dared voice aloud.

Her latest message, sent from Saint Petersburg’s late evening, burned with a quiet intensity: “Your film idea isn’t dramatic—it’s beautiful. A guy chasing an unnamed dream? That’s so real. If I could leave tomorrow, I’d go to Morocco—bazaars, deserts, stories in every corner. What about you, Sunny? Where would you run to if you could?” Her words felt like an invitation to bare his soul, and the midnight hour, with its stillness, made honesty feel less daunting.

Sunny’s fingers hovered over the keyboard, his heart thudding. Morocco’s vibrant chaos sounded like a place where dreams could breathe, unlike the rigid structure of his life. He

typed, “Japan, still—those quiet temples mixed with chaotic cities feel like freedom. But honestly, sometimes I just want to run from all the ‘shoulds’ here—should study this, should marry that girl. Ever feel like you’re living someone else’s plan?” He hit send, the confession slipping out like a breath he’d been holding for years.

The vulnerability left him exposed, but the darkness of his room felt like a cocoon, shielding him from the judgment of Delhi’s daylight. He pictured Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe curled up on a couch, her blue eyes scanning his words. Did she feel the same weight, the same pull to break free? Their chats had grown bolder, moving from lighthearted banter about golgappas and banyas to questions that cracked open their deepest fears and hopes.

His phone buzzed, and her reply lit up the screen: “Oh, Sunny, yes. My parents want me to be a teacher, stay close, marry a ‘nice Russian boy.’ But I want to write, wander, live for me. It’s scary to admit, but I feel like I can tell you anything. What’s the one ‘should’ you wish you could break most?” Her openness was a mirror, reflecting his own rebellion. The distance between them—4,000 miles, five time zones—felt irrelevant in this moment of raw connection.

Sunny’s throat tightened. He typed, “The marriage thing. They’ve got my whole life planned—a Punjabi girl, a house in Delhi, kids by 30. But I want love that feels… alive, not arranged. What about you? What’s the ‘should’ you’d ditch?” Sending it felt like crossing a line, admitting a dream that could upend his family’s world. Yet with Anastasia, it felt safe, like confessing to a friend who saw him, not the son or student he was supposed to be.

As he waited for her reply, he glanced at the family photo on his desk—his parents’ proud smiles, Simran’s forced grin. Guilt flickered, but it was drowned out by the thrill of this midnight exchange. Anastasia’s next message could deepen their bond or shift it entirely, and either way, Sunny knew these confessions were rewriting the story he’d been told to live—one truthful word at a time.

Chapter 12: Dreams of Saint Petersburg

The Delhi night was thick with humidity, the kind that made Sunny’s cotton t-shirt cling to his skin as he sat on his bed, phone in hand. It was 1:15 AM, and the world outside his South Delhi room was hushed, save for the occasional scooter buzzing down the street. The glow of his phone screen was his only companion, casting soft light across the scattered textbooks and family photos on his desk. Anastasia’s latest message, sent from Saint Petersburg’s late night, pulsed with a warmth that kept him awake: “The marriage ‘should’ is big for me too. Everyone expects a traditional life, but I want love that chooses me, not my parents’ approval. Morocco’s my escape dream, but sometimes I just want to be free here. What’s one thing in Delhi you’d escape to if you could?”

Her words, raw and unguarded, stirred a restlessness in Sunny. He closed his eyes, imagining Saint Petersburg—not the postcard version with golden domes and snowy canals, but Anastasia’s version: cozy cafes tucked into narrow streets, the soft glow of White Nights, her laughter as she described roller-skating bears. He wanted to walk those streets, feel the

chill of a Russian winter, and see the world through her eyes. The thought was absurd—a Delhi boy in Russia?—but it fueled a dream he couldn't shake.

He typed, "If I could escape in Delhi, maybe I'd go to Lodhi Gardens at dawn. It's quiet, green, like the city's holding its breath. But honestly, I'm starting to dream of Saint Petersburg—your cafes, your fountains. What's one place there you escape to when you need to think?" He hit send, his heart racing with the boldness of admitting he was dreaming of her world. The confession felt like a step toward something bigger, a bridge between their midnight chats and a future he couldn't yet name.

As he waited, Sunny scrolled through their chat, rereading her stories of banyas and kvass, her defiance against her parents' plans. Each message painted Saint Petersburg as a place of magic and possibility, a stark contrast to the weight of Delhi's expectations. His parents' voices echoed in his mind—"Beta, focus on your future"—but they felt distant, drowned out by the pull of this connection.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Lodhi Gardens sounds peaceful—I'd love to see it. My escape spot? The Summer Garden, all old trees and quiet paths. I go there to write or just dream. You in Saint Petersburg? I can see you loving the canals at dusk. 😊 What's one thing you'd do here if you visited?" The image of him wandering her city, her by his side, sent a jolt through him. It was a fantasy, but one that felt vivid, almost possible.

Sunny typed, "I'd walk those canals with you, probably ask a million questions about Russia. Maybe try kvass and fail at pronouncing it. 😅 What's one thing you'd do in Delhi if you came here?" Sending it felt like inviting her into his world, even if just in words. The thought of her in Delhi—navigating its chaos, tasting golgappas, laughing at its quirks—made his chest ache with a strange, hopeful longing.

As he leaned back, the fan creaking above, Sunny let himself dream of Saint Petersburg—not just as a place, but as a symbol of the freedom Anastasia represented. The spark between them was growing, and with every message, he was starting to believe that dreams, no matter how far-fetched, could take root in the quiet of midnight.

Chapter 13: Delhi's Hidden Frustrations

The Sunday morning bustle of South Delhi seeped into Sunny's room, a cacophony of vegetable hawkers calling out prices and neighbors gossiping over morning chai. It was 10:30 AM, and the sun blazed through his window, illuminating the clutter of his desk—textbooks on marketing, a half-empty coffee mug, and a family photo that seemed to watch him with silent expectation. Sunny sat cross-legged on his bed, phone in hand, still riding the high of last night's chat with Anastasia. Her latest message, sent from Saint Petersburg's early morning, glowed on his screen: "Me in Delhi? I'd get lost in those markets you describe, probably eat too many golgappas! 😄 I'd want to see your world—where you study, where you dream. What's a place in Delhi that feels like *you*?"

The question lingered, stirring a mix of warmth and unease. He wanted to share his world with her, but Delhi felt like a maze of contradictions—vibrant yet suffocating, alive yet tethered to tradition. He typed, "A place that feels like me? Maybe Hauz Khas Village—old

ruins mixed with cafes, feels like history and freedom at once. But honestly, Delhi can be frustrating—everyone's watching, judging. What's a place in Saint Petersburg that frustrates you?" He hit send, the words carrying a truth he rarely voiced. Delhi's hidden frustrations—its gossiping aunties, its rigid social rules—were a weight he carried daily, and admitting it to Anastasia felt like peeling back a layer of himself.

As he waited for her reply, Sunny's mind drifted to the city's undercurrents. Yesterday, at a family friend's lunch, his mother had casually mentioned a "nice girl" from a nearby Punjabi family, her tone implying it was time to "think seriously." His father had nodded, adding, "Good connections, beta. That's how you build a future." Sunny had forced a smile, his thoughts on Anastasia's dreams of Morocco and writing, worlds away from arranged marriages and "suitable matches." The pressure was subtle but relentless, like the city's smog seeping into every corner.

His phone buzzed, pulling him back. Anastasia's message read: "Hauz Khas sounds so you—old and new together! Saint Petersburg frustrates me sometimes too—people can be so formal, and everyone expects you to fit their idea of 'proper.' My university's library is gorgeous but feels like a cage when I'm stuck studying what I 'should.' What's the worst part of Delhi's judgment for you?" Her honesty mirrored his, and the shared frustration felt like a bond, a secret rebellion against their worlds' demands.

Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. He typed, "The worst? People deciding my life before I can—marriage, job, all mapped out. I want to choose my own story, you know? What's the worst 'proper' expectation you face there?" Sending it felt like a release, a confession to someone who understood the ache of being pulled in two directions.

Downstairs, his mother called, "Sunny, come for brunch! We're going to the Guptas' later!" The invitation was code for another networking session, another chance to parade him as the dutiful son. He sighed, pocketing his phone, but Anastasia's words lingered, a reminder of a world where he could dream beyond Delhi's hidden frustrations. As he headed to the kitchen, the spark of their connection burned brighter, a quiet promise that he might yet carve his own path, no matter what the city—or his family—expected.

Chapter 14: Virtual Dates Begin

The Delhi evening was alive with the hum of Sunday traffic, the distant clatter of street vendors, and the faint strains of a neighbor's Bollywood playlist drifting through Sunny's open window. It was 7:30 PM, and the Singh household was winding down—his parents settled in front of the TV for a family drama serial, Simran texting friends in her room. Sunny, however, was in his own world, sprawled on his bed with his phone propped against a pillow, heart racing as he prepared for his first video call with Anastasia. Their chat had evolved beyond text, and her suggestion last night—"Let's try a video call tomorrow, like a virtual coffee date!"—had kept him restless all day.

He adjusted his earphones, checking his reflection in the phone's camera. Messy hair tamed, a clean navy t-shirt, and a nervous grin he couldn't suppress. The app's call button glowed, and with a deep breath, he tapped it, the screen buffering as it connected to Saint

Petersburg, where it was 2:00 PM. The anticipation felt like waiting for a Diwali firework to burst—thrilling, uncertain, alive.

The screen flickered, and there she was—Anastasia, her blonde hair loose, sitting in what looked like a cozy room with bookshelves and a steaming mug on the table. Her blue eyes lit up as she smiled, waving. “Sunny! Hi! You’re real!” Her voice, lightly accented, was warm and teasing, instantly easing his nerves.

“Hey, Anastasia!” he laughed, his voice cracking slightly. “You’re real too! Is that… a library behind you?”

She grinned, tilting her phone to show more of her space—a small apartment with fairy lights strung across a wall, a window revealing Saint Petersburg’s gray sky. “Just my room. Not as grand as Peterhof, but it’s home. Where are you?”

Sunny panned his phone, showing his cluttered desk and the glimpse of Delhi’s twinkling lights outside. “My room in South Delhi. Not as cool as yours, but it’s mine.” He paused, suddenly shy. “This is weirdly cool, right? Like a date across continents.”

“Very cool,” she said, sipping her coffee. “So, virtual date rule: we share something. I brought Russian tea cookies—look!” She held up a plate of crumbly, sugar-dusted treats. “Your turn. What’s a Delhi snack?”

Sunny laughed, grabbing a packet of spicy namkeen from his desk. “This—crunchy, spicy, total chaos in your mouth. Wish I could send you some.” They spent the next hour trading stories—her describing the bitter chill of Russian winters, him mimicking the chaos of a Delhi auto-rickshaw ride. Laughter flowed easily, her giggles at his exaggerated gestures matching his chuckles at her attempt to pronounce “golgappa.”

But the call wasn’t all light. When she asked, “What’s one thing you wish you could change about Delhi life?” Sunny hesitated, then said, “The pressure to be someone I’m not—perfect son, future banker. You?”

Her smile softened. “The same, kind of. Everyone here wants me to be practical, but I want to write, live big. You get that, don’t you?” He nodded, the shared longing binding them tighter than the 4,000 miles between.

As the call ended—her promising to show him a Saint Petersburg sunrise next time—Sunny leaned back, the spark now a steady glow. His mother’s voice called for him to join them for tea, but he lingered, replaying Anastasia’s smile. These virtual dates were more than escapism; they were the start of something real, a defiance of Delhi’s expectations, and a dream he wasn’t ready to let go.

Chapter 15: Language of the Heart

The Delhi night was settling in, the clock on Sunny’s nightstand reading 9:15 PM as the city’s sounds softened to a low hum—distant horns, a neighbor’s TV, the occasional bark of a street dog. His room, lit only by the dim glow of a desk lamp and his phone, felt like a cocoon

shielding him from the world outside. After their first video call earlier that evening, Sunny was still buzzing, Anastasia's laughter and teasing accent echoing in his mind. Their virtual date had left him craving more, and now, back in their text chat, their conversation was diving deeper. Her latest message, sent from Saint Petersburg's afternoon, glowed on his screen: "Sunny, that call was so fun! 😊 Your namkeen sounds dangerous—I'd love to try it. Okay, new question: what's something you wish you could say to your family but can't?"

The question pierced through the warmth of their earlier banter, touching the raw edge of Sunny's reality. He leaned against his headboard, the fan's lazy spin stirring the humid air. His parents were downstairs, likely discussing his future over chai—his father's voice droning about internships, his mother's gentle nudging toward "suitable girls." The words he wanted to say to them—I want to choose my own path, my own love—felt like a betrayal of their sacrifices, yet they burned in his chest.

He typed slowly, each word a step into uncharted territory: "I'd tell them I don't want their plan for me—bank job, arranged marriage. I want to find my own way, maybe with someone they'd never expect. Hard to say that out loud here. What about you? What's something you hold back from your family?" He hit send, his heart pounding. The confession felt like speaking a new language, one of raw honesty that Anastasia seemed to understand instinctively.

As he waited, he scrolled back through their chat, her words about Russian winters and dreams of Morocco painting vivid pictures. Their connection was growing, not just in shared laughs but in this ability to voice the unsaid. He imagined her in Saint Petersburg, maybe curled up with a book, her phone lighting up her face as she read his message. Did she feel the same pull, this language of the heart that needed no translation?

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Oh, Sunny, that's so brave to admit. I'd tell my parents I don't want to be the 'safe' daughter they want—teacher, local life. I want to write stories, maybe fall in love with someone from far away. It's scary to think they'd disapprove. Do you ever feel like your heart speaks a different language from your world?" Her words were a mirror, reflecting his own struggle, and the question struck deep.

Sunny typed, "All the time. My heart wants freedom, love that's mine to choose, but my world wants tradition. Your heart—what does it say that Russia doesn't understand?" Sending it felt like baring his soul, yet with Anastasia, it was effortless, like they'd found a shared dialect of dreams and defiance.

Downstairs, his mother's voice called, "Sunny, come say goodnight!" He sighed, pocketing his phone, but Anastasia's words lingered, a reminder that his heart was learning to speak louder. As he joined his family, the glow of their chat stayed with him, a secret language weaving a bond stronger than the distance between Delhi and Saint Petersburg.

Chapter 16: Family Shadows Loom

The Delhi morning was crisp for October, the air carrying a faint chill as sunlight streamed through the window of Sunny's South Delhi room. It was 10:00 AM, and the Singh household was abuzz with Sunday preparations—his mother clanging pots in the kitchen, his father

discussing cricket scores with a neighbor over the phone. Sunny sat at his desk, phone in hand, the glow of his chat with Anastasia a quiet rebellion against the family's routine. Her latest message, sent from Saint Petersburg's early morning, lingered on his screen: "My heart wants to chase stories and love without borders, but Russia expects duty—family, stability. It's like living in two worlds. What does your heart say, Sunny, when Delhi's expectations get loud?"

Her words hit like a truth he'd been dodging. Last night's confession about wanting a life beyond his parents' plans had left him raw, and now, with the family's expectations swirling around him, the weight felt heavier. He typed, "My heart wants to write my own story—maybe films, maybe love I choose. But Delhi's loud with 'do this, marry that.' It's like I'm hiding who I am. Ever feel like you're hiding from your family?" He hit send, his chest tight with the honesty. The chat with Anastasia was a lifeline, but the shadows of his family's expectations loomed larger each day.

As he waited for her reply, his mother's voice cut through the air. "Sunny, beta, come downstairs! We're going to the Sharmas' for lunch, and they want to talk about your future." The word "future" carried a familiar edge—code for marriage prospects or job plans. Sunny's stomach knotted. The Sharmas, close family friends, were notorious for parading their daughter, Neha, as a "perfect match" for him. Polite, educated, Punjabi—everything his parents wanted. Everything he didn't.

He trudged downstairs, where his mother, Priya, was arranging a tray of sweets for the visit. "Neha's doing so well," she said, her tone casual but pointed. "MBA from a top college, such a good girl. You two should talk more." His father, Rajinder, looked up from his newspaper, nodding. "Stable family, good values. You need to think about settling down after graduation, Sunny."

The words felt like a cage closing in. Sunny forced a nod, his mind flashing to Anastasia's message about living in two worlds. He excused himself to grab his phone, desperate for her reply. It was there: "Hiding? All the time. My parents don't know I'm on this app, dreaming of a life they'd call reckless. I want to tell them, but it's terrifying. Do you ever want to just… say it all to your family?" Her honesty was a mirror, reflecting his own fear of confronting the shadows cast by his parents' expectations.

He typed quickly, "Yeah, I want to tell them I don't want their plan, but it'd break their hearts. They think they're saving me from mistakes. What would your parents say if they knew about us talking?" Sending it felt like a risk, naming their connection as something real. The Sharmas' lunch loomed, a reminder of the life he was expected to embrace, but Anastasia's world—her dreams, her defiance—pulled him toward a different path.

As he pocketed his phone and followed his parents out the door, the shadows of their expectations felt darker, but the spark of his chats with Anastasia burned brighter. He wasn't ready to face his family yet, but each message was a step toward a truth he could no longer ignore.

Chapter 17: Anastasia's World Unveiled

The Delhi evening was settling into a warm haze, the sky tinged orange as the sun dipped below the skyline. It was 8:00 PM in South Delhi, and the Singh household was quiet after the tense lunch at the Sharmas'. Sunny had endured polite smiles and veiled hints about Neha's "eligibility," his parents' approving nods a silent pressure. Now, back in his room, he shut the door against the weight of their expectations and opened his phone, the glow of Anastasia's latest message a beacon in the dim light: "If my parents knew we were talking? They'd probably lecture me about 'suitable boys' and staying focused. They don't get why I'd connect with someone so far away. 😔 What would yours say about me? Also, want to share a glimpse of our worlds? Send me a pic of something you see every day!"

Her words, a mix of vulnerability and curiosity, pulled Sunny into her orbit. He leaned back against his pillows, the fan's hum blending with the distant clatter of Delhi's evening. The idea of his parents knowing about Anastasia—a Russian girl, a stranger from an app—sent a chill through him. They'd see it as a betrayal, a rejection of their carefully curated plans. But her request for a photo felt like an invitation to bridge their worlds, to make their connection tangible.

He glanced around his room, searching for something that felt like *him*. His eyes landed on the small balcony overlooking the street—a slice of Delhi's chaos, where streetlights flickered and vendors packed up their carts. He stepped outside, the air thick with the scent of roasted corn and exhaust, and snapped a photo: a neon-lit chai stall, scooters weaving through traffic, and a stray dog napping nearby. He typed, "This is my view—Delhi at its loudest. 😅 My parents would freak if they knew about you—'wrong culture,' they'd say. Here's my world. Show me yours?" He attached the photo and hit send, his heart racing with the thrill of sharing something real.

As he waited, he imagined Anastasia's world—Saint Petersburg's icy elegance, so different from Delhi's sweaty vibrance. Her stories of Summer Gardens and White Nights had painted a vivid picture, but he craved more, a glimpse into the life of the girl who was starting to unravel his own. His phone buzzed, and her message loaded: a photo of a narrow cobblestone street, lined with pastel buildings and a canal reflecting the soft glow of streetlamps. "This is my walk home—quiet, cold, dreamy. My parents would say you're a 'distraction,' Sunny, but I think you're more than that. 😊 What's one thing in your photo that feels like home to you?"

The image was a window into her world, and her words—calling him more than a distraction—lit a fire in his chest. He zoomed in on her photo, noticing the way the light danced on the water, so unlike Delhi's chaotic streets. He typed, "The chai stall in my pic—it's where I sneak away to think, away from family stuff. Feels like home. In your photo, what's the one spot you love most?" Sending it felt like weaving their worlds closer, each photo and question a thread in a growing tapestry.

Downstairs, his mother's voice called, "Sunny, beta, don't stay up too late!" The reminder of his reality—family, duty, the Sharmas' expectations—felt like a shadow, but Anastasia's unveiled world was a light pulling him forward. As he waited for her reply, he realized their connection was no longer just words; it was a shared unveiling, a defiance of the borders and expectations keeping them apart.

Chapter 18: Sunny's Secret Smile

The Delhi night wrapped around Sunny's room like a warm blanket, the clock ticking past 10:00 PM as the city's sounds softened to a murmur—crickets chirping, a distant motorcycle revving. The Singh household was winding down, his parents' TV muted, Simran's music faintly audible through her closed door. Sunny sat on his bed, phone propped against a pillow, the glow of Anastasia's latest message casting a soft light across his face: "That canal in my photo? It's my favorite—I walk there when I need to dream. The water's so calm, it makes everything feel possible. 😊 Your chai stall sounds like a perfect escape. What's one thing that makes you smile when you're there?"

Her words, paired with the image of her cobblestone street, felt like a window into a world where dreams weren't just allowed but celebrated. Sunny leaned back, picturing his chai stall—the rickety wooden bench, the vendor's banter, the steaming glass cups that warmed his hands. It was where he'd sit after tense family dinners, letting Delhi's chaos fade into the background. But now, it wasn't just the chai that made him smile—it was the thought of sharing it with Anastasia, her questions pulling out pieces of him he'd kept hidden.

He typed, "The chai guy's terrible jokes—they're so bad, they're good. 😄 Makes me laugh even on rough days. Lately, though, it's these chats with you that really make me smile. What's something that's got you smiling in Saint Petersburg lately?" He hit send, a secret smile tugging at his lips. The admission felt bold, like stepping into sunlight after years in the shade. These late-night exchanges were becoming his refuge, a place where he could be the Sunny who dreamed of films and freedom, not the son bound by duty.

His phone buzzed almost instantly, and Anastasia's reply lit up the screen: "Your chai guy sounds like a character! I'm smiling imagining you laughing there. Honestly? These talks with you make me smile too—feels like you get me, even from so far. 😊 Okay, what's a secret thing you do when no one's watching that makes you happy?" Her words sent a warmth spreading through him, her confession mirroring his own. The idea that he could make her smile across 4,000 miles felt like a small miracle.

Sunny glanced at the family photo on his desk—his parents' proud grins, Simran's reluctant pose—and felt a pang of guilt. If they knew about these chats, they'd call it a distraction, a rebellion against their plans for his future. But the smile Anastasia sparked was something they couldn't touch, a quiet defiance blooming in the privacy of his room. He typed, "Secret? Sometimes I sketch storyboards for films I'll never make—just ideas in my head. Makes me feel alive. What's your secret happiness?" Sending it felt like sharing a piece of his soul, one he'd kept locked away from Delhi's judging eyes.

As he waited, he imagined her by that canal, her blonde hair catching the light as she typed. The distance between them felt irrelevant when their words carried such weight. Downstairs, his father's cough broke the silence, a reminder of the world waiting to pull him back. But for now, Sunny's secret smile belonged to Anastasia, to their shared dreams, and to the growing spark that made even Delhi's shadows feel conquerable.

Chapter 19: Emotional Bridges Built

The Delhi night was thick with the scent of rain-soaked earth, a rare October shower having swept through South Delhi, leaving the air cooler and the streets glistening under streetlights. It was 11:30 PM, and the Singh household was asleep, the only sounds the faint drip of water from the balcony and the hum of Sunny's ceiling fan. He lay on his bed, phone in hand, the glow of Anastasia's latest message illuminating his face: "Sketching storyboards? That's so cool, Sunny! I can see you making films someday. My secret happiness? I write poems in a notebook I hide under my bed—silly, maybe, but it's my escape. 😊 What's a moment in your life you'd turn into a film scene?"

Her words felt like a bridge, spanning the distance between their worlds—Delhi's chaotic pulse and Saint Petersburg's quiet canals. Sunny's heart swelled at her encouragement, the idea that she believed in his dreams, however unformed. Her hidden poems, tucked away like his storyboards, made him feel closer to her, as if they were both guarding fragile pieces of themselves from their families' expectations.

He typed, fingers moving with a newfound ease: "Your poems sound amazing—I'd love to read one someday. A film scene? Maybe the time I sat at my chai stall during a monsoon, watching people run for cover, feeling like I could disappear into my own story. What moment in your life would you film?" He hit send, picturing her in her Saint Petersburg room, her notebook filled with verses that captured her heart. The thought of her sharing something so personal made his chest ache with a mix of hope and longing.

As he waited, Sunny's mind wandered to the emotional bridges they were building. Each message, each confession, was a plank laid across the 4,000-mile gap, sturdy enough to hold their dreams but fragile against the weight of their realities. Today's lunch at the Sharmas' had been another reminder of that—Neha's polite smiles, his parents' not-so-subtle hints about "settling down." He'd nodded along, but his thoughts were on Anastasia, on the way her questions made him feel seen, not judged.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "That monsoon scene sounds so vivid—I can picture you there, dreaming. For me, maybe the time I sat by the Neva River at midnight during White Nights, the sky still light, feeling like anything was possible. Your storyboards and my poems—maybe we're both telling stories in secret. 😊 What's one emotion you wish you could show the world but keep hidden?" The question was a new plank, daring him to cross further into vulnerability.

Sunny's breath caught. He typed, "I hide how much I want to break free—fear of disappointing my family keeps it locked up. But with you, I can say it. What emotion do you hide?" Sending it felt like stepping onto their bridge, trusting it to hold. The guilt of defying his parents lingered, but Anastasia's words were a lifeline, pulling him toward a version of himself he was only beginning to understand.

Outside, the rain had stopped, leaving a quiet that mirrored the stillness in his heart. Downstairs, his family slept, unaware of the emotional bridges Sunny was building with a girl in Russia. Each message strengthened their connection, making the distance feel less like a barrier and more like a space where their truest selves could meet. As he waited for her reply, he knew this bridge was changing him, one honest word at a time.

Chapter 20: The First Video Call

The Delhi evening was alive with the hum of October festivities, the faint crackle of early Diwali preparations echoing through South Delhi's streets. It was 8:00 PM, and Sunny's room was a sanctuary from the chaos outside—his door closed, the fan spinning lazily, and his phone propped against a stack of textbooks on his desk. Tonight was different; after days of texting and their first planned video call mentioned earlier, Sunny was about to see Anastasia again, live from Saint Petersburg. The anticipation made his palms sweat as he adjusted his earphones, checking his reflection in the phone's camera—hair combed, a fresh green kurta to look presentable but not overdone. His heart thumped like the dhol drums at a festival.

The app's call button glowed, and he tapped it, the screen buffering as it connected across 4,000 miles. Saint Petersburg was four and a half hours behind, making it 3:30 PM there. The wait felt endless, each second stretching his nerves. Then the screen lit up, and there she was—Anastasia, her blonde hair tucked behind her ears, sitting by a window with soft daylight streaming in. Her smile was instant, warm, and a little shy. "Sunny! Wow, you're really there!" she said, her accented voice carrying a laugh that eased his tension.

"Hey, Anastasia!" he grinned, leaning closer to the screen. "You're real too. Is that… snow outside?" He squinted at the faint white flecks beyond her window.

She laughed, turning her phone to show a light dusting of snow on the street below. "Just starting—early for us. Your room looks cozy! What's that noise outside?" Her curiosity made Delhi's chaos feel vibrant, not overwhelming.

"Probably some Diwali prep—firecrackers or street vendors," Sunny said, panning his phone to show his balcony view: twinkling lights, a crowded street with kids chasing each other. "This is Delhi at night—never quiet."

They settled into the call, the first awkward moments melting into easy chatter. She showed him her mug of Russian tea, steam curling up, and he held up a glass of mango lassi, joking about its neon color. "To our virtual date!" she toasted, clinking her mug against the screen. He laughed, mimicking her, their shared gesture bridging the distance.

The conversation flowed—her describing a Saint Petersburg bakery she loved, him recounting a college friend's disastrous attempt at making golgappas. But it deepened when she asked, "Sunny, what's one thing you love about Delhi that you'd want me to see?" Her blue eyes held his through the screen, earnest and searching.

He paused, then said, "The way Old Delhi's lanes come alive at night—lights, food, stories in every corner. It's messy but real. What about Saint Petersburg? What's one thing you'd show me?" His voice was soft, the question carrying a hope he barely understood.

"The Neva River at dusk," she said, her smile softening. "It glows, like it's holding all the city's secrets. I'd walk there with you." The image made his chest ache—a dream too vivid to dismiss.

As the call stretched past an hour, his mother's voice broke through, "Sunny, dinner soon!" He muted his mic, nodding vaguely, not wanting to break the moment. When they finally hung up—her promising to show him a Russian sunrise next time—Sunny sat back, the glow of the call lingering. The first video call hadn't just been a chat; it was a spark made visible, a moment where Delhi and Saint Petersburg felt like one world, and his secret smile was no longer just his own.

Chapter 21: Eyes Meeting Screens

The Delhi night was thick with the buzz of pre-Diwali excitement, the air carrying the faint scent of firecrackers and roasted peanuts from street vendors below. It was 9:30 PM, and Sunny's South Delhi room was a pocket of calm amidst the chaos, the only light coming from his phone screen and a flickering desk lamp. His family was downstairs, his parents engrossed in a TV serial, Simran humming along to music in her room. Sunny sat cross-legged on his bed, earphones in, heart racing as he prepared for another video call with Anastasia. Their first call the previous evening had left him buzzing, her smile and voice lingering like a melody he couldn't shake. Now, the app's call button glowed, a portal to Saint Petersburg, where it was 5:00 PM.

He tapped the button, the screen buffering as it connected. His reflection stared back—hair slightly messy, a navy t-shirt, and a nervous grin he couldn't suppress. When Anastasia's face appeared, her blue eyes sparkled under the soft light of her Saint Petersburg apartment, and her smile was like a sunrise. "Sunny! Hi again!" she said, her accent wrapping around his name like a warm hug. "You look happy tonight."

"You too," he laughed, leaning closer to the screen. "Is that… a scarf? Already winter there?" He noticed the colorful knit draped over her shoulders, the window behind her showing a gray sky with faint snowflakes.

She grinned, tugging the scarf. "Early winter vibes! Show me your Delhi night—what's happening out there?" Sunny panned his phone to the balcony, revealing the twinkling streetlights and a group of kids setting off small firecrackers, their laughter echoing up.

"Diwali's getting close—everyone's practicing," he said, settling back. Their eyes met through the screens, and for a moment, the distance felt irrelevant. The call flowed effortlessly—she described a Saint Petersburg tram ride through snowy streets, he mimicked the chaos of a Delhi market. They laughed over her attempt to say "namkeen" and his butchering of "pelmeni," their shared giggles building a bridge across continents.

Then she leaned closer, her expression softening. "Sunny, when you look at Delhi, what's one thing that makes you feel… you?" Her question was gentle but probing, her eyes holding his through the digital divide.

He hesitated, then said, "Maybe the way the city never stops—like me, always restless, wanting more. What about you? What makes you feel like *you* in Saint Petersburg?" His voice was quiet, the question a thread pulling them closer.

“The canals at night,” she said, her gaze steady. “They’re quiet, reflective, like my thoughts when I’m writing. I feel free there.” Her eyes lingered on his, and Sunny felt a jolt, as if their screens were no barrier at all.

The call stretched on, but his mother’s voice interrupted, “Sunny, beta, come help with the Diwali lights tomorrow!” He muted his mic, nodding absently, his focus on Anastasia’s smile. When they hung up—her promising to show him her favorite canal next time—Sunny leaned back, the memory of her eyes meeting his through the screen etched in his mind. It wasn’t just a call; it was a moment where their worlds collided, and the spark between them burned brighter, defying the 4,000 miles between Delhi and Saint Petersburg.

Chapter 22: Whispers of Vulnerability

The Delhi night was alive with the hum of anticipation, the faint crackle of Diwali firecrackers already punctuating the air outside Sunny’s South Delhi room. It was 10:45 PM, and the Singh household was settling down—his parents’ voices had faded from the living room, replaced by the soft murmur of Simran’s music through the wall. Sunny sat on his bed, the glow of his phone casting shadows across the faded posters and cluttered desk. The latest video call with Anastasia, just an hour ago, had left him reeling, her blue eyes and gentle questions lingering like the afterglow of a sparkler. Now, back in their text chat, her latest message from Saint Petersburg’s evening (6:15 PM there) pulsed with a new depth: “Sunny, your restless Delhi makes me want to see it all. 😊 The canals make me feel free, but sometimes I’m scared to chase that freedom. What’s one fear you don’t tell anyone?”

Her question was a whisper, soft but sharp, cutting through the playful banter of their earlier calls. Sunny’s heart thudded as he leaned against his pillows, the fan’s hum blending with the distant pop of firecrackers. Fear was a topic he avoided, buried under the bravado of college life and the expectations of being the “good son.” But with Anastasia, 4,000 miles away, the words felt safer, like a secret shared in the dark.

He typed slowly, each word a step into uncharted territory: “I’m scared I’ll never be brave enough to choose my own life—films, love, whatever feels real. If I disappoint my family, it’s like betraying everything they’ve built. What’s your biggest fear, Anastasia?” He hit send, his breath catching. The confession felt like a crack in his armor, exposing a vulnerability he’d never voiced, not even to himself.

As he waited, he pictured her in Saint Petersburg, maybe by her window, snowflakes dusting the glass as she read his words. Their connection, built through late-night texts and video calls, was becoming a space where fears could be whispered without judgment. The weight of his parents’ expectations—today’s mention of Neha’s “bright future” at lunch—felt heavier, but Anastasia’s openness was a lifeline, pulling him toward courage.

His phone buzzed. Her reply: “Oh, Sunny, that’s so honest. My biggest fear? That I’ll stay in this safe life forever, writing poems no one reads, never chasing my dreams. My parents want stability, but I’m scared of losing myself to it. Do you ever feel like your fear is louder than your dreams?” Her words were a mirror, reflecting his own struggle, and the question tightened the bond between them.

Sunny typed, “Sometimes, yeah. My dreams feel big—films, freedom—but fear of letting my family down screams louder. How do you keep your dreams louder than your fears?” Sending it was like reaching across the miles, his vulnerability laid bare. The Delhi night seemed to hold its breath, the firecrackers quiet for a moment, as if waiting for her response.

Downstairs, his mother’s footsteps creaked, a reminder of the world he was defying with every message. But in this moment, the whispers of vulnerability he shared with Anastasia were building something stronger—a bridge of trust, fragile yet resilient, that made the distance between Delhi and Saint Petersburg feel like nothing at all.

Chapter 23: Clashing Traditions

The Delhi morning was crisp, the October sun filtering through the haze to cast a golden glow over South Delhi’s bustling streets. It was 11:00 AM, and the Singh household was alive with the clatter of Diwali preparations—Sunny’s mother arranging marigold garlands in the living room, his father discussing guest lists for the upcoming festival with a neighbor. Sunny sat at his desk, phone in hand, the weight of last night’s vulnerable exchange with Anastasia still lingering. Her latest message, sent from Saint Petersburg’s early morning (6:30 AM there), glowed on his screen: “My dreams stay loud when I write, Sunny—it’s like shouting back at fear. 😊 Your films sound like your shout. But sometimes my family’s traditions—Orthodox holidays, ‘proper’ life plans—feel like walls. Do Delhi’s traditions ever feel like that to you?”

Her words struck a chord, resonating with the tension that had shadowed him all morning. The Singh household was steeped in tradition—Diwali meant prayers, family visits, and subtle nudges toward “settling down” with a “suitable” girl. Anastasia’s mention of walls felt all too familiar. Sunny typed, “Delhi’s traditions are heavy—Diwali’s coming, and it’s all about family, duty, showing off the ‘perfect’ son. I love the lights, but the expectations? Like walls closing in. What’s a Russian tradition that feels like a wall to you?” He hit send, his fingers trembling with the honesty. Admitting this to Anastasia felt like a quiet rebellion against the life mapped out for him.

Downstairs, his mother’s voice called, “Sunny, beta, come help with the rangoli! And wear something nice for the temple tonight!” The temple visit was another ritual, a public display of devotion and family unity, but it also meant more questions about his future—marriage, career, the “right” path. He sighed, pocketing his phone as he joined his mother, who was meticulously arranging colored powders into intricate patterns on the floor. “Neha’s family will be at the temple,” she said, her tone casual but loaded. “Such a good girl, from a respected family.”

Sunny nodded absently, his mind on Anastasia’s world of snowy canals and hidden poems. The clash of traditions was stark—Delhi demanded conformity, while Anastasia’s dreams of writing and wandering echoed his own longing for freedom. His phone buzzed in his pocket, and he stole a glance while his mother wasn’t looking. Anastasia’s reply: “The temple sounds beautiful but heavy, like you said. For me, it’s Orthodox Christmas—everyone expects you to follow the rituals, pray, marry ‘right.’ It’s lovely but feels like a cage when I want to write my own life. How do you deal with those expectations?”

The question lingered as Sunny knelt to help with the rangoli, his hands tracing patterns while his mind raced. He wanted to reply but knew he had to wait until he was alone. The clash of traditions—his family's insistence on a scripted future versus the pull of a life he could choose with Anastasia—was growing louder. Later, back in his room, he typed, "I deal by hiding—smiling, nodding, but dreaming in secret. You're the only one I tell the truth to. How do you handle your family's traditions?" Sending it felt like a lifeline thrown across the 4,000 miles, a defiance of the walls closing in.

As he waited for her response, the sounds of Diwali prep—laughter, clinking dishes—felt like a reminder of the traditions he both loved and resented. Anastasia's world, unveiled through their chats, was teaching him to question the walls of his own, and with each message, he felt closer to a courage he'd never known he had.

Chapter 24: Shared Playlists and Stories

The Delhi evening was electric with the buzz of Diwali preparations, the scent of marigold garlands and frying pakoras drifting through the open window of Sunny's South Delhi room. It was 7:30 PM, and the Singh household was a flurry of activity—his mother coordinating sweets for neighbors, his father debating firecracker budgets with a cousin over the phone. Sunny, however, was cocooned in his room, door closed, earphones in, and phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg's early afternoon (3:00 PM there): "Hiding and nodding—I get that too, Sunny. 😔 I deal with traditions by writing poems to escape. Let's share something fun—make me a playlist of your Delhi vibes! I'll send you one for Saint Petersburg. What's a song that feels like your city?"

Her suggestion sparked a lightness in Sunny, a chance to weave their worlds closer despite the clash of traditions weighing on him. The temple visit earlier had been a parade of expectations—Neha's family smiling pointedly, his mother whispering about "future plans." But now, with Anastasia's words, he could escape back to their shared space. He grinned, opening his music app to curate a playlist—Bollywood beats like "Tum Hi Ho" for Delhi's romantic chaos, street anthems like "Delhi Se Hoon" for its gritty pulse. He typed, "Playlist coming! Delhi's loud—think Bollywood drama and market hustle. I added some tracks that feel like my chai stall nights. 😊 What's a song that feels like your canals? Send me your playlist!" He attached the link and hit send, excitement bubbling at the thought of her hearing his world.

As he waited, he imagined Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe curled up with her notebook, picking songs that captured her city's dreamy quiet. Their chats had become a tapestry of shared dreams and frustrations, and this exchange of playlists felt like a new thread, blending their stories through music. His phone buzzed, and her message arrived with a link: "Your playlist is so alive! I can feel Delhi's energy. Mine's got Tchaikovsky for the ballet vibe and some Russian indie for canal walks. Okay, story time: what's a memory tied to one of your songs?" Her playlist opened with a haunting piano piece, then shifted to a soft indie track that felt like snow falling—her world in sound.

Sunny leaned back, the fan humming above as he listened to her music, each note pulling him into Saint Petersburg's misty streets. He typed, "Your songs make me see your canals! My song 'Tum Hi Ho'—it played at a college fest when I first thought about breaking free,

dancing with friends under fairy lights. What's a memory behind one of your songs?" Sending it felt like sharing a piece of his heart, the music a bridge stronger than words alone.

Her reply came quickly: "That sounds so magical, Sunny! My indie song 'Noch'—I heard it walking the Neva at midnight, dreaming of a life beyond my parents' plans. Your turn: what's a story you'd tell if you could, no judgment?" The question deepened their connection, music fading into stories that bared their souls.

Sunny typed, "I'd tell a story of a guy who leaves Delhi to chase a dream he can't name yet, finding love that changes everything. What's yours?" As he sent it, his mother's voice called, "Sunny, help with the Diwali lanterns!" He sighed but smiled, Anastasia's playlist still playing softly. Their shared songs and stories were weaving a bond that made Delhi's traditions feel less like walls and more like hurdles he might one day leap.

Chapter 25: A Bond Deepens

The Delhi night was alive with the crackle of Diwali firecrackers, their bursts of light visible through Sunny's window as South Delhi pulsed with festive energy. It was 9:00 PM, and the Singh household was winding down after a hectic day of preparations—his mother arranging trays of sweets, his father overseeing the cleaning of the puja room. Sunny had slipped away to his room, door locked, earphones in, and Anastasia's latest message glowing on his phone from Saint Petersburg's afternoon (4:30 PM there): "Your story sounds like a film I'd watch, Sunny—a guy chasing dreams and love? Beautiful. 😊 My story would be a girl leaving her small world to write tales that touch hearts, finding someone who sees her. What's one dream you'd chase if fear wasn't holding you back?"

Her words wrapped around him like a warm shawl, deepening the bond that had grown through shared playlists and late-night confessions. The music from her Saint Petersburg playlist—soft indie chords and classical notes—still lingered in his earphones, blending with the distant pop of firecrackers. Anastasia's story, so like his own, made the 4,000 miles between them feel like a mere step. He leaned against his headboard, the fan's hum a steady rhythm, and typed, "If fear was gone, I'd make a film—something raw, about finding yourself against all odds. Maybe even move somewhere new, like your Saint Petersburg. 😄 What's your fearless dream?" He hit send, his heart racing with the intimacy of the question, the bond between them tightening like a knot.

As he waited, Sunny's mind drifted to the day's events. At the temple, Neha's parents had cornered him with talk of "shared values," while his mother beamed, her hints about marriage unmistakable. The weight of tradition felt suffocating, but Anastasia's messages were a lifeline, pulling him toward a world where dreams weren't just allowed but celebrated. Her belief in his filmmaking sparked a courage he hadn't known he possessed.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "A film like that would be incredible, Sunny—I'd be first in line! My fearless dream? To publish my poems, travel the world, and love without rules. I feel like I can tell you anything. 😊 What's one thing you've never told anyone but want to share now?" Her openness was a spark, igniting a warmth that pushed back Delhi's shadows. The question, so vulnerable, invited him to cross a new threshold.

Sunny's fingers hovered, the weight of her trust sinking in. He typed, "I've never told anyone I feel trapped here—like I'm acting in someone else's movie. Talking to you feels like writing my own script. What's something you've kept secret?" Sending it was like stepping into a spotlight, his truth laid bare. The bond with Anastasia was no longer just a spark; it was a flame, steady and bright, burning through his fears.

Outside, a firecracker burst, its echo fading into the night. His mother's voice called faintly, "Sunny, beta, don't stay up too late!" But he barely heard her, lost in the deepening connection with a girl in Saint Petersburg who saw the real him. As he waited for her reply, the Diwali lights outside seemed to mirror the glow within him—a bond built on shared dreams, strong enough to challenge the traditions that bound them both.

Chapter 26: Parental Suspicions

The Delhi night was ablaze with Diwali's glow, the sky outside Sunny's South Delhi room flickering with firecrackers and the streets alive with laughter and music. It was 10:30 PM, and the Singh household was settling after a long day of festival preparations—his mother, Priya, tidying the puja room, his father, Rajinder, reviewing expenses for the celebrations. Sunny sat on his bed, door locked, the soft glow of his phone a shield against the festive chaos. Anastasia's latest message, sent from Saint Petersburg's early evening (6:00 PM there), pulsed with vulnerability: "Trapped in someone else's movie? Oh, Sunny, I feel that. My secret? I'm scared I'll never be brave enough to show my poems to the world. You make me want to try. 😊 What's one thing you'd do if you could rewrite your script right now?"

Her words deepened their bond, each confession a brick in the bridge they were building across 4,000 miles. Sunny's heart raced as he typed, "If I could rewrite my script, I'd tell my parents I want to chase films, not their bank job, and maybe find love that's mine to choose—like talking to you. 😄 What would your rewrite be?" He hit send, a smile tugging at his lips, but the thrill was tinged with unease. The Diwali bustle had brought more than lights and sweets; it had sharpened his parents' scrutiny.

Earlier that day, as they'd lit oil lamps together, Priya had noticed his distraction. "Sunny, beta, why are you always on that phone?" she'd asked, her tone sharp with suspicion. Rajinder had chimed in, "No time for nonsense apps. The Sharmas asked about you again—Neha's a good girl." Their words were a reminder of the life they envisioned for him, one where his dreams of filmmaking and a Russian girl had no place. Sunny had mumbled an excuse about college group chats, but his mother's narrowed eyes lingered, as if she sensed a secret.

His phone buzzed with Anastasia's reply: "Your rewrite sounds so brave, Sunny! I'd rewrite mine to leave Saint Petersburg, publish my poems, and find someone who gets me—you know, like you do. 😊 Ever worry your parents might find out about dreams like these?" The question hit like a spark in dry grass. Sunny glanced at his door, half-expecting his mother to knock. The thought of his parents discovering his chats with Anastasia sent a chill through him—they'd see it as rebellion, a betrayal of their sacrifices.

He typed, "Yeah, I worry. My mom's already suspicious about my phone. If they knew about you, they'd lose it—'wrong culture,' they'd say. Do your parents ever check on you like that?"

Sending it felt like confessing to a double life. The bond with Anastasia was his sanctuary, but the shadows of parental suspicions were creeping closer, threatening to expose it.

Downstairs, he heard his father's footsteps, then a murmur about "keeping an eye on Sunny." His heart sank. Priya's voice followed, softer but firm: "He's a good boy, but we need to guide him right." The words were a cage, tightening around his dreams. Sunny muted his phone, Anastasia's message still glowing, her question unanswered. The Diwali lights outside sparkled, but inside, the clash of his secret bond and his parents' growing suspicions cast a shadow, making him wonder how long he could keep his two worlds apart.

Chapter 27: Russian Winters, Indian Summers

The Delhi night was alight with Diwali's festive glow, the air thick with the scent of burnt firecrackers and sweet jalebis from a neighbor's kitchen. It was 11:15 PM, and the Singh household was finally quiet, the day's celebrations winding down—his parents asleep after hours of socializing, Simran's room silent save for the faint hum of her fan. Sunny sat on his bed, the glow of his phone a lifeline to Anastasia, whose latest message from Saint Petersburg's evening (6:45 PM there) shimmered on his screen: "My parents don't check my phone, but they'd lecture me for days if they knew I was talking to a guy from India! 😅 Your mom sounds intense. Let's escape for a bit—tell me about a Delhi summer. I'll tell you about a Russian winter!"

Her playful tone was a balm against the tension of his parents' suspicions, which had hung over him like a storm cloud all day. The Diwali celebrations had been a whirlwind of rituals and relatives, with Priya's watchful eyes catching every moment he stole to check his phone. Her comment at dinner—"Sunny, beta, put that phone away, focus on family"—had been sharp, and Rajinder's grunt of agreement felt like a warning. But now, alone in his room, Sunny could slip back into the world he shared with Anastasia, where their dreams danced free of judgment.

He typed, a smile breaking through: "Delhi summers are brutal—40°C, sweaty rickshaw rides, mangoes everywhere to cool you down. I'd hide in cafes with AC, sketching ideas. 😄 Tell me about your Russian winters—do you really jump in snow like in movies?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, bundled in a scarf, her breath visible in the icy air. The contrast between their worlds—Delhi's scorching summers and her frozen winters—felt like a metaphor for their lives, yet their connection thrived in the differences.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with the fading pops of firecrackers outside. He imagined Anastasia's winter, all snow and silence, so unlike the relentless heat of his summers spent dodging family expectations at crowded markets or college libraries. Her world felt like a dreamscape, one he longed to step into, even if just through her words.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Delhi summers sound intense! Mangoes, though—I need to try those. Russian winters are magical but freezing, like -20°C. We bundle up, drink hot tea, and yes, some crazy people jump in snow after saunas! 😄 I love skating on frozen canals. What's one summer memory that feels like you?" Her vivid description painted a

picture so clear he could almost feel the cold, and her question invited him deeper into their shared escape.

Sunny typed, “Skating on canals sounds unreal! One summer memory? Sneaking to Hauz Khas Village at dusk, sketching by the lake while the city cooled off. Felt free for once. What’s a winter memory that’s all you?” Sending it felt like swapping pieces of their souls, each memory a bridge between Russian winters and Indian summers. The parental suspicions still loomed—his mother’s sharp glances, his father’s stern warnings—but in this moment, Anastasia’s words were a refuge, a reminder that their bond could weather any season, any distance.

Chapter 28: Honest Hearts Exposed

The Delhi night was steeped in the afterglow of Diwali, the air still carrying the faint smokiness of firecrackers and the sweet linger of laddoos shared among neighbors. It was 12:30 AM, and the Singh household was silent, the festive fervor finally giving way to sleep—his parents’ snores faintly audible, Simran’s room dark and quiet. Sunny sat cross-legged on his bed, the dim glow of his phone a beacon in the darkness, Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg’s late evening (8:00 PM there) pulling him into their shared world: “Hauz Khas at dusk sounds like a painting, Sunny! My winter memory? Sitting by a frozen lake, writing poems under a streetlamp’s glow, feeling like the world was mine. 😊 What’s one thing you’ve never told anyone about your dreams?”

Her question was a key, unlocking a door Sunny had kept bolted even from himself. The Diwali celebrations had been a whirlwind—relatives praising his “bright future,” his mother’s pointed comments about Neha, his father’s stern reminder to “stay focused.” But their suspicions about his phone use had sharpened; Priya had caught him texting during a family prayer, her eyes narrowing with unspoken questions. Now, in the quiet of his room, with only the fan’s hum and the distant bark of a stray dog, Sunny felt safe to bare his heart to Anastasia.

He typed, fingers trembling with the weight of honesty: “I’ve never told anyone I want to make a film that shows what it’s like to feel trapped by family but still love them. It’s like I’m torn between duty and me. What’s a dream you’ve kept hidden?” He hit send, his pulse racing. The confession felt like stepping naked into the light, but with Anastasia, 4,000 miles away, it was a risk worth taking. Their bond, woven through playlists, stories, and late-night calls, had become a space where their truest selves could breathe.

His phone buzzed, and Anastasia’s reply glowed: “Oh, Sunny, that film would be so powerful. My hidden dream? To write a book of poems about love that crosses borders, but I’m scared no one will care. You make me believe I could try. 😊 What’s the hardest part of being torn like that?” Her words were a mirror, reflecting his own fears and hopes, and her encouragement lit a fire in him, pushing back the shadows of his parents’ expectations.

Sunny leaned back, the fan’s creak blending with his thoughts. The hardest part? The guilt of wanting more than the life his parents had built for him—a bank job, a “suitable” marriage. He typed, “The guilt—it’s like betraying their sacrifices. But talking to you feels like I’m

allowed to want more. What's the hardest part of your fear?" Sending it was like exposing his heart completely, trusting Anastasia to hold it gently.

As he waited, the memory of his mother's suspicious glance during the Diwali puja lingered, a reminder of the world waiting to pull him back. But Anastasia's messages were a lifeline, her honest heart meeting his across continents. The distance between Delhi and Saint Petersburg felt irrelevant when their truths aligned, and as he awaited her reply, Sunny knew their exposed hearts were forging a bond stronger than any tradition could break.

Chapter 29: The Pull of Distance

The Delhi night was heavy with the post-Diwali quiet, the frenetic energy of the festival giving way to a stillness punctuated only by the occasional hum of a passing scooter. It was 1:15 AM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was asleep, the faint glow of oil lamps still flickering in the living room where his parents had performed the final puja. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan's creak blending with the soft buzz of his phone, where Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg's late evening (8:45 PM there) glowed: "The guilt of wanting more—that's so real, Sunny. For me, the hardest part is fearing I'll disappoint my family if I chase my dreams. 😔 It's like they love me, but not the me I want to be. How do you handle the guilt? Also, does the distance between us ever feel… too much?"

Her words pierced the quiet, the question about distance landing like a stone in still water. Sunny leaned back, the weight of the 4,000 miles between them suddenly sharper. Their bond—built on late-night texts, video calls, and shared dreams—felt unbreakable in moments like these, but the physical gap, the time zones, the worlds apart, tugged at him. His parents' suspicions had grown, too; Priya had hovered over his shoulder at breakfast, glancing at his phone, her voice tight: "Sunny, beta, no secrets, okay?" The pressure was mounting, and Anastasia's question forced him to face the pull of distance head-on.

He typed, fingers hesitant: "The guilt eats at me, but I push it down by dreaming—like these chats with you. The distance? Sometimes it feels huge, like I'll never see your canals. But your words make it feel small. 😊 Does it ever feel too much for you?" He hit send, his heart a mix of hope and fear. Admitting the distance's weight was new, but with Anastasia, honesty was the only language they spoke.

As he waited, Sunny pictured her in Saint Petersburg, maybe by her window, snow dusting the glass as she read his message. The contrast of their lives—Delhi's humid chaos versus her icy calm—made their connection feel like a miracle, yet the distance was a silent challenge. Could a bond this strong survive without a shared place, a shared time?

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "I push down fear by writing, like you with dreaming. The distance feels big sometimes—I wonder what it'd be like to walk Delhi with you. But your messages make you feel close, like you're here. 😊 What's one thing you'd do if we were in the same city?" The question sparked a vivid image—her laughing in Old Delhi's lanes, tasting golgappas, her blue eyes wide with wonder.

Sunny smiled, typing, "If we were in the same city, I'd take you to my chai stall, share bad jokes, and show you Delhi's chaos. What would you do with me in Saint Petersburg?"

Sending it felt like defying the distance, turning it from a barrier into a dream they could share. The pull of those 4,000 miles was real, but so was their bond, growing stronger with every word.

Outside, a stray firecracker popped, a reminder of Delhi's relentless pulse. His parents' suspicions loomed, but in this moment, Anastasia's message was a tether, pulling him closer to a world where love and dreams could bridge any distance. As he awaited her reply, Sunny felt the stirrings of a courage he'd need to face both the miles and the expectations threatening to tear him from her.

Chapter 30: Promises in Pixels

The Delhi night was a tapestry of fading Diwali echoes, the air still tinged with the smoky sweetness of spent firecrackers and the distant hum of late-night revelers. It was 2:00 AM, October 13, 2025, and the Singh household was steeped in silence, the glow of oil lamps long extinguished. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan's creak a soft rhythm against the quiet, his phone a glowing lifeline to Anastasia in Saint Petersburg, where it was 9:30 PM. Her latest message pulsed on his screen: "In Saint Petersburg, I'd take you to my favorite cafe by the canal, share hot chocolate, and show you the city's glow at dusk. 😊 It feels so real imagining you here. What's one promise you'd make if we ever met?"

Her words, vivid and warm, painted a picture so clear Sunny could almost taste the hot chocolate, feel the chill of a Russian evening. The question about a promise stirred something deep—a longing to make their connection more than pixels on a screen. But the weight of distance, coupled with his parents' growing suspicions, cast a shadow. Just hours ago, at a family breakfast, his father had caught him smiling at his phone, his voice stern: "Sunny, no distractions. The Sharmas are serious about Neha." The warning had stung, but Anastasia's message was a refuge, pulling him back to their shared world.

He typed, fingers steady despite his racing heart: "If we met, I'd promise to show you Delhi's heart—every chaotic, beautiful bit—and listen to your poems under the stars. 😄 What's your promise to me?" He hit send, the words feeling like a vow, fragile but bold, etched in the digital space between them. The idea of meeting her, once a distant dream, now felt like a possibility he couldn't let go, even as his family's expectations tightened their grip.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg cafe, her blonde hair catching the light as she typed. Their bond, built through late-night confessions and shared playlists, was a promise in itself—a commitment to honesty, to dreaming beyond their worlds' constraints. But the 4,000 miles, the cultural chasms, and his parents' watchful eyes made every step toward her feel like a leap.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Oh, Sunny, your Delhi under the stars sounds perfect. My promise? I'd share my poems with you, no hiding, and walk every canal with you, telling stories. 😊 What's one thing you'd want us to do together, no matter where?" Her words were a spark, making the distance feel conquerable, her promise a thread weaving their futures closer.

Sunny smiled, typing, “I’d want us to create something together—maybe a film, maybe a story, just us telling the world who we are. What’s your one thing?” Sending it felt like sealing their promises in pixels, a digital pact defying the miles and the looming pressure of his parents’ plans. The memory of his father’s stern glance lingered, but it was drowned out by the glow of Anastasia’s words.

Outside, Delhi’s night whispered on, a stray firecracker popping in the distance. His mother’s footsteps creaked faintly, a reminder of the world waiting to pull him back. But in this moment, the promises he and Anastasia shared—fragile, pixelated, yet fiercely real—were a beacon, lighting a path toward a future where their bond could outshine any distance or tradition.

Chapter 31: Cultural Exchanges

The Delhi evening was alive with the lingering buzz of Diwali’s aftermath, the air carrying the faint sweetness of leftover sweets and the occasional pop of a stray firecracker. It was 7:30 PM, October 13, 2025, and the Singh household was settling into a quieter rhythm—Sunny’s mother, Priya, organizing the kitchen, his father, Rajinder, reading the evening paper. Sunny had retreated to his room, door closed, the fan’s hum blending with the soft glow of his phone. Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 3:00 PM, glowed on his screen: “Creating something together—a film, a story—that’s beautiful, Sunny! 😊 Let’s share more of our worlds: tell me about a Delhi tradition you love, even if it’s complicated. I’ll share a Russian one!”

Her words sparked a warmth in Sunny, a chance to weave their worlds closer despite the 4,000 miles and the growing shadow of his parents’ suspicions. Earlier, at a family tea, Priya had caught him texting, her voice sharp: “Sunny, beta, enough with that phone. Focus on what’s important.” The unspoken pressure—Neha, a stable job, tradition—hung heavy, but Anastasia’s invitation to share felt like a breath of freedom.

He typed, picturing her in Saint Petersburg’s crisp afternoon: “I love Diwali—the lights, the sweets, the way the city glows. But it’s complicated—everyone expects you to play the perfect family role. 😅 What’s a Russian tradition you love, even if it’s tough?” He hit send, imagining her reading his words by a snowy canal. The idea of sharing traditions felt like a cultural exchange, a way to bridge their differences while honoring their dreams.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the memory of Diwali’s oil lamps and rangoli patterns vivid in his mind. He loved the festival’s warmth but resented the expectations it carried—relatives eyeing him as the “eligible bachelor,” his mother’s hints about Neha. Anastasia’s world, with its poetry and canals, felt like a place where he could be himself, not a role.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia’s reply: “Diwali sounds magical, Sunny, even with the pressure! I love Maslenitsa—pancake feasts, bonfires, spring vibes. But it’s tough when everyone expects you to act ‘proper,’ like I’m auditioning for a traditional life. 😔 What’s one thing about Diwali that feels like you?” Her words painted a picture of Russian festivity, yet echoed his struggle with tradition’s weight, deepening their bond.

Sunny smiled, typing, “The Diwali fireworks—they’re wild, free, like my dreams of filmmaking. What’s one thing about Maslenitsa that feels like you?” Sending it felt like exchanging pieces of their hearts, each tradition a window into their worlds. The distance between Delhi and Saint Petersburg shrank with every word, their cultural exchange a defiance of the expectations—his parents’ suspicions, her society’s norms—trying to pull them apart.

Downstairs, his father’s voice called, “Sunny, come discuss tomorrow’s guests!” The reminder of family duties loomed, but Sunny lingered, Anastasia’s message a reminder of a world where traditions could be shared, not imposed. Their bond was growing stronger, a bridge of stories and dreams that made even the weightiest traditions feel lighter, if only for a moment.

Chapter 32: Family Dinners and Doubts

The Delhi evening was wrapped in the warm glow of post-Diwali calm, the air carrying the faint sweetness of shared sweets and the distant hum of neighbors tidying up after festivities. It was 8:00 PM, October 14, 2025, and the Singh household was gathered for a family dinner—a rare occasion when everyone sat together, the dining table laden with Priya’s homemade biryani, raita, and a platter of leftover Diwali laddoos. Sunny sat across from his sister Simran, who was scrolling on her phone under the table, while his parents, Priya and Rajinder, exchanged glances that carried the weight of unspoken plans. His phone, tucked in his pocket, buzzed faintly with Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 3:30 PM: “Fireworks for your dreams? I love that, Sunny! 😊 For me, Maslenitsa’s bonfires feel like me—wild, hopeful. What’s one tradition you wish you could change to fit you better?”

The question lingered in Sunny’s mind, but the dinner table demanded his attention. Priya served him a generous scoop of biryani, her smile warm but probing. “Sunny, beta, you’ve been so quiet lately,” she said, her tone laced with concern. “Always on that phone. Is everything okay at college?” Her eyes flicked to his pocket, where the faint buzz had betrayed him.

“Just group chats, Ma,” Sunny mumbled, forcing a smile. The lie was second nature now, but the weight of hiding Anastasia—and the dreams she sparked—pressed harder. Rajinder cleared his throat, setting down his spoon. “No time for distractions, Sunny. The Sharmas called today. Neha’s parents are keen to meet again. They see a good future for you two.” His father’s words were firm, a reminder of the life they envisioned—stable, traditional, Punjabi.

Sunny’s stomach knotted, the biryani suddenly tasteless. Neha was kind, but she was a symbol of everything he didn’t want—a life scripted by others. Across the table, Simran shot him a sympathetic glance, but she stayed silent, her own battles with family expectations unspoken. The dinner table felt like a stage, where Sunny played the dutiful son while his heart was with Anastasia, her bonfires and poems a world away.

He excused himself early, claiming a headache, and retreated to his room, the fan’s hum a familiar comfort. Pulling out his phone, he read Anastasia’s message again, her question

about changing traditions hitting deep. He typed, “I wish I could make Diwali about my dreams—maybe a night of telling stories, not just prayers and matchmaking. 😅 What tradition would you tweak to fit you?” He hit send, the words a quiet rebellion against the doubts stirred by the dinner.

Anastasia’s reply came quickly: “Diwali stories sound perfect, Sunny! I’d make Maslenitsa less about family duties and more about chasing dreams—maybe a bonfire where we share hopes, not just pancakes. 😊 Ever feel like your family’s plans are drowning your dreams?” Her words echoed his thoughts, the shared struggle tightening their bond across the 4,000 miles.

Sunny typed, “All the time. Dinner tonight was all about their plans—marriage, job, no room for me. You ever feel that with your family?” Sending it felt like baring his doubts to the one person who understood. The dinner had left him shaken, his parents’ expectations and suspicions looming larger, but Anastasia’s words were a lifeline, pulling him back to a world where his dreams could breathe. As he waited for her reply, the doubts lingered, but so did the hope that their bond could outshine the pressures threatening to pull him under.

Chapter 33: Late-Night Support

The Delhi night was cloaked in a post-Diwali hush, the faint scent of smoke and sweets lingering in the air as South Delhi settled into stillness. It was 1:00 AM, October 15, 2025, and the Singh household was asleep, the only sounds the creak of Sunny’s ceiling fan and the occasional hum of a passing scooter outside. He sat on his bed, propped against pillows, the glow of his phone casting a soft light across his face. Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 8:30 PM, pulsed on his screen: “Oh, Sunny, I know that feeling—family dinners where they plan your life like it’s theirs. 😔 My parents keep pushing teaching, ‘safe’ choices. I feel like I’m hiding who I am. How do you keep going when it feels so heavy? I’m here for you.”

Her words were a lifeline, a warm hand reaching across 4,000 miles to pull him from the doubts stirred by tonight’s family dinner. The memory of his parents’ pointed comments about Neha and “settling down” still stung, their suspicions about his phone use sharpening with every glance. Priya had even asked to see his phone after dinner, her tone casual but probing; he’d deflected with a laugh, but the tension lingered. Now, in the quiet of his room, Anastasia’s support felt like a shield against the weight of expectations.

Sunny typed, fingers moving with a mix of gratitude and vulnerability: “Your messages keep me going, Anastasia. 😊 It’s heavy when they talk marriage and jobs like I don’t get a say. I just dream of a life where I’m me—filmmaking, maybe even seeing your canals. How do you stay strong against your parents’ plans?” He hit send, his heart lighter for her presence. The thought of her in Saint Petersburg, maybe curled up with a cup of tea, reading his words, made the distance feel surmountable.

As he waited, he leaned back, the fan’s hum blending with his thoughts. Anastasia’s support was more than words; it was a reminder that he wasn’t alone in his rebellion against tradition. The dinner had left him rattled—Rajinder’s stern reminder to “focus on the future,”

Priya's watchful eyes—but her message was a beacon, pulling him toward a version of himself he was only beginning to know.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, you're so brave to dream like that. I stay strong by writing—it's my way of saying I exist. Your films will do that too. 😊 When it's heavy, I imagine a life where I'm free to choose. Picture us meeting—what would we talk about first?" Her words were a warm embrace, her question sparking a vivid image of them sitting by her canal, sharing dreams under a Russian sky.

Sunny smiled, typing, "We'd talk about our stories—your poems, my films—and how we got free. 😄 Your support means everything. What would you want to talk about first if we met?" Sending it felt like a promise, a shared hope that their late-night support could outshine the pressures of their worlds. The doubts from dinner lingered, but Anastasia's words were a steady hand, guiding him through the darkness of Delhi's expectations toward a future they might one day share.

Chapter 34: Anastasia's Hidden Struggles

The Delhi night was steeped in a rare quiet, the post-Diwali frenzy fading into a gentle hum of distant traffic and the occasional bark of a stray dog. It was 2:00 AM, October 15, 2025, and the Singh household was asleep, the glow of festive lights dimmed. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan's creak a soft backdrop, his phone casting a warm glow as he read Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 9:30 PM: "Talking about our stories by a canal sounds perfect, Sunny. 😊 Your support keeps me going too. If we met, I'd want to talk about what scares us most and how we'd face it together. But honestly, sometimes I'm scared I'm not strong enough for this—my parents, their plans. Do you ever feel like you're not enough?"

Her words hit Sunny like a quiet thunderclap, revealing a vulnerability she'd only hinted at before. The image of her—bold, poetic Anastasia—doubting her strength shook him, mirroring his own fears. The dinner with his parents' pointed talk of Neha and "stability" still lingered, their suspicions about his phone tightening like a noose. Priya's sharp glance when he'd checked a notification mid-conversation had left him uneasy, but Anastasia's confession opened a new layer of their bond, one where their hidden struggles could breathe.

He typed, fingers steady with empathy: "Anastasia, you're stronger than you know—your poems, your dreams, they're proof. 😊 I feel like I'm not enough all the time—like I'll never live up to my parents' plans or my own dreams. But you make me believe I can try. What's the hardest thing pushing against you right now?" He hit send, his heart aching for her. The 4,000 miles between them felt irrelevant when their fears aligned so closely, each message a lifeline pulling them through their struggles.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe staring at the snowy canal outside, her notebook of poems hidden under her bed. Her strength—writing in defiance of her parents' "safe" plans—mirrored his secret storyboards, sketches of a life he barely dared dream. The weight of his parents' expectations, their growing suspicions, pressed harder, but her vulnerability made his own feel less lonely.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, your words mean so much. The hardest thing? My mom's been pushing me to meet a family friend's son—'perfect match,' she says. It feels like a trap. I want my own path, but I'm scared of hurting her. 😔 What's the hardest thing for you right now?" Her struggle echoed his, the pressure of arranged matches a shared chain binding them to their families' worlds.

Sunny typed, "That sounds so heavy. For me, it's my parents pushing Neha and a bank job—feels like I'm being locked in. I'm scared of disappointing them too, but I want my own life, like you. How do you keep your heart strong?" Sending it was like baring his soul, their hidden struggles laid bare in the quiet of the night. The distance between Delhi and Saint Petersburg felt like nothing when their fears and dreams intertwined so tightly.

Outside, a stray breeze stirred the curtains, a reminder of Delhi's restless pulse. His parents' suspicions loomed, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, illuminating a path where their struggles could be shared, their hearts strengthened by each other's courage. As he awaited her reply, Sunny felt their bond deepen, a quiet vow to face their fears together, no matter the miles.

Chapter 35: Sunny's Bold Decisions

The Delhi night was cloaked in a gentle stillness, the post-Diwali air carrying a faint chill and the lingering scent of burnt firecrackers. It was 2:45 AM, October 16, 2025, and the Singh household was deep in slumber, the only sounds the creak of Sunny's ceiling fan and the occasional hum of a distant motorcycle. Sunny sat on his bed, propped against pillows, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 10:15 PM: "Sunny, your heart's so strong for wanting your own life. 😊 I keep mine strong by writing—it's my rebellion. My mom's pushing that guy again, and it's suffocating. How do you find courage when it feels like betraying them? What's one bold thing you'd do if you could?"

Her words, raw and searching, struck a chord deep within Sunny. The dinner two nights ago still haunted him—his mother's pointed comments about Neha, his father's stern reminder to "stay on track." Priya had even grabbed his phone briefly yesterday, glancing at the screen before he snatched it back, claiming it was a college group chat. Their suspicions were closing in, and Anastasia's question about courage felt like a challenge to break free from the cage of expectations. Her struggle with her mother's matchmaking mirrored his own, making their bond a shared defiance against their worlds.

Sunny's fingers hovered over the keyboard, his heart pounding with a mix of fear and resolve. Her mention of a bold move sparked something new—a decision that had been simmering beneath his doubts. He typed, "Your writing's so brave, Anastasia—it's like my storyboards, my quiet rebellion. 😄 The courage is hard, but I'm starting to think I'd rather disappoint them than lose myself. If I could be bold? I'd tell my parents I'm not following their plan—no bank job, no arranged marriage. What's your bold move?" He hit send, the words feeling like a leap off a cliff. Admitting this, even to her, was his boldest step yet, a decision to claim his own path.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his racing thoughts. The idea of confronting his parents was terrifying—Rajinder's stern lectures, Priya's disappointed sighs—but Anastasia's courage, her poems defying her family's plans, made him believe he could find his own. The 4,000 miles between them felt like nothing when their hearts spoke so clearly, her struggles fueling his resolve.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, that's huge—telling them no would be so brave! My bold move? I'd send my poems to a publisher, even if it scares me, and tell my mom I'm choosing my own love. 😊 What's the first step you'd take to make that bold move real?" Her words were a spark, igniting his courage further. The image of her sending her poems, defying her mother, made his own decision feel possible.

Sunny typed, "First step? I'd start saving for a filmmaking course, maybe even a trip to see you. 😅 What's your first step?" Sending it felt like cementing his bold decision, a promise to himself and her. The weight of his parents' suspicions—Priya's glances, Rajinder's warnings—loomed, but Anastasia's support was a beacon, guiding him toward a future where his dreams could live. As he awaited her reply, the Delhi night felt charged with possibility, his bold decisions taking root in the quiet, ready to bloom against all odds.

Chapter 36: Virtual Adventures Together

The Delhi night was wrapped in a soft October coolness, the post-Diwali calm settling over South Delhi like a gentle sigh. It was 10:00 PM, October 16, 2025, and the Singh household was quiet—Priya and Rajinder asleep after a day of post-festival tidying, Simran's room dark save for the faint glow of her phone. Sunny sat cross-legged on his bed, the fan's hum blending with the distant hum of a neighbor's TV, his phone a glowing portal to Anastasia in Saint Petersburg, where it was 5:30 PM. Her latest message pulsed on his screen: "Saving for a filmmaking course and a trip here? Sunny, that's so bold! 😊 My first step would be emailing a publisher my poems, even if my hands shake. Let's do something fun—plan a virtual adventure! Where would we go if we could explore together right now?"

Her words, brimming with excitement and support, lit a spark in Sunny, easing the tension from his parents' growing suspicions. Just hours ago, at dinner, Rajinder had questioned his "late-night phone habits," his tone heavy with warning, while Priya's eyes lingered on him, searching for secrets. But Anastasia's invitation to a virtual adventure felt like an escape, a chance to dream beyond Delhi's expectations and the looming pressure of Neha's family. Their bond, now a tapestry of shared fears and bold decisions, was ready for a new thread.

Sunny grinned, typing, "Your poems to a publisher? That's huge, Anastasia! 😄 Okay, virtual adventure: let's explore Old Delhi together. I'd take you through Chandni Chowk—spicy chaat stalls, colorful bazaars, and hidden temples. Where would you take me in Saint Petersburg?" He hit send, imagining her laughing in the crowded lanes of his city, her blue eyes wide with wonder. The idea of a virtual adventure, even through words, made the 4,000 miles between them feel like a game they could play together.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe sipping tea by her window, snow dusting the canals outside. Their shared rebellion—his filmmaking dreams, her poetry—made this imaginary journey feel vivid, a

defiance of the physical distance and cultural pressures pulling at them. His phone buzzed, and her reply glowed: “Chandni Chowk sounds like a feast for the senses! I’d take you to the Hermitage Museum—endless art, golden rooms, and secret corners where we’d whisper stories. 😊 What’s one thing we’d do in Old Delhi to make it unforgettable?”

Sunny’s heart raced, her words painting a picture of Saint Petersburg’s grandeur. He typed, “In Old Delhi, we’d sneak onto a rooftop at dusk, watch the city light up, and tell each other one dream we’ve never shared. What’s one thing we’d do in the Hermitage to make it ours?” Sending it felt like stepping into their adventure, their words weaving a world where they could be together, free from family expectations.

The memory of his father’s stern voice lingered, but Anastasia’s message drowned it out, her virtual adventure a reminder of the courage they drew from each other. As he awaited her reply, the Delhi night felt alive with possibility, their bond a bridge strong enough to carry them through any imagined journey, no matter the miles or the doubts waiting at home.

Chapter 37: The First Argument
The Delhi night was cloaked in a restless quiet, the post-Diwali calm broken only by the occasional hum of a scooter or a neighbor’s late-night chatter. It was 11:30 PM, October 17, 2025, and the Singh household was asleep, the faint glow of a streetlight seeping through Sunny’s window. He sat on his bed, the fan’s creak a steady pulse, his phone glowing with Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 7:00 PM: “A rooftop in Old Delhi sounds magical, Sunny! 😊 In the Hermitage, we’d find a quiet gallery, sit by a painting, and share a dream no one else knows. But… I’m feeling off today. My mom found my poetry notebook, got upset, said it’s a waste of time. Ever feel like your dreams are slipping away?”

Her words, usually a warm bridge across the 4,000 miles, carried a weight that mirrored Sunny’s own tension. The day had been heavy—his mother, Priya, had caught him texting during a family errand, her voice sharp: “Sunny, beta, what’s so important on that phone?” Rajinder had added, “No more distractions. The Sharmas expect you to meet Neha again soon.” The pressure was suffocating, and Anastasia’s message, though vulnerable, stirred a flicker of frustration in him. Why did their dreams always feel like a battle?

He typed, his fingers hesitant: “I’m sorry about your mom, Anastasia—that’s rough. 😔 My parents are on me too, pushing this girl Neha, and it’s exhausting. Sometimes I wonder if dreaming like this is even worth it when it’s so hard. Do you ever think it’s too much?” He hit send, regretting the edge in his words instantly. The question wasn’t just about her mother’s reaction—it was about their bond, the distance, the constant fight against their families’ expectations. The spark of their virtual adventures felt dimmer tonight.

His phone buzzed quickly. Anastasia’s reply: “Sunny, are you saying our talks aren’t worth it? I thought you got how much this means to me. My mom’s words hurt, but I keep going because of you. Why does it sound like you’re giving up?” Her tone, sharp even in text, stung. It was their first hint of discord, and it hit Sunny like a cold wave. He hadn’t meant to doubt their connection, but the weight of his parents’ suspicions and the looming Neha situation had spilled into his words.

He typed, heart racing: “I’m not giving up, Anastasia—I swear. It’s just hard when my parents keep pushing a life I don’t want. I didn’t mean to hurt you. 😔 Can we talk this out? Maybe a call?” He hit send, his chest tight. The idea of their first argument felt like a crack in their carefully built bridge, but her honesty, even in anger, was a reminder of how real their bond was.

Her reply came slower: “Okay, a call. But it hurt, Sunny. I’m trying so hard to hold onto my dreams, and I thought you were too. Let’s talk.” The message was softer but firm, and Sunny’s stomach knotted. He initiated a video call, the screen buffering as it connected to Saint Petersburg. When her face appeared—blue eyes tired, a faint frown—he felt a pang of guilt.

“Anastasia, I’m sorry,” he started, his voice low. “I’m just… scared. My parents, this life—it’s closing in. But you’re what keeps me dreaming.”

She nodded, her expression softening. “I’m scared too, Sunny. My mom’s words made me feel small, but I don’t want to lose this—us. Let’s keep fighting for our dreams, okay?”

As they talked, the argument’s sting faded, replaced by a deeper understanding. The Delhi night and Saint Petersburg’s evening felt closer, their bond strengthened by facing the crack together. The argument was a reminder: even in their struggles, their promises in pixels held firm.

Chapter 38: Making Amends Across Oceans

The Delhi night was cloaked in a gentle stillness, the post-Diwali streets of South Delhi quiet save for the occasional hum of a late-night auto-rickshaw. It was 1:00 AM, October 18, 2025, and the Singh household was asleep, the faint scent of leftover sweets lingering in the air. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan’s creak a soft rhythm, his phone glowing with the afterglow of his video call with Anastasia, which had just ended. Their first argument, sparked by his frustrated words and her hurt response, had left him shaken, but their hour-long talk had been a salve, her tired blue eyes softening as they promised to keep fighting for their dreams. Her last text, sent from Saint Petersburg’s late evening (8:30 PM there), pulsed on his screen: “Sunny, I’m glad we talked. 😊 I was scared we’d lose this. Let’s make it up to each other—share something to rebuild our bridge. I’ll start: here’s a line from a poem I wrote today, ‘Stars don’t care for borders, they just shine.’ Your turn?”

Her words, poetic and forgiving, washed away the lingering sting of their argument. Sunny leaned back, the weight of his parents’ suspicions—Priya’s sharp glance at his phone during yesterday’s breakfast, Rajinder’s gruff “focus on family”—still heavy, but Anastasia’s gesture felt like a lifeline across oceans. The argument had cracked their bridge, but her offer to rebuild it sparked a warmth in him, a chance to mend their bond with something meaningful.

He typed, fingers steady with resolve: “That line’s beautiful, Anastasia—it’s like us. 😊 To make it up, here’s a sketch I made tonight: a rooftop in Delhi, you and me watching fireworks. I’m sorry for doubting us. What’s the rest of that poem about?” He attached a photo of his rough storyboard—a pencil sketch of two figures on a rooftop, stars and sparks

above—then hit send, his heart racing. The drawing was a piece of his dream, a visual promise to keep their connection alive despite the 4,000 miles and his family's pressures.

As he waited, Sunny pictured Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe by her canal-facing window, reading his message with a smile. Their call had been raw—his apology for questioning their dreams, her admission that her mother's disapproval had shaken her—but it had ended with laughter, her teasing him about his terrible attempt at pronouncing "pelmeni." The argument had shown him how much she meant, how fragile yet resilient their bond was.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, your sketch is amazing—I can see us there! 😊 The poem's about love that defies distance, like stars linking skies. I'm sorry too for snapping. Let's keep building this. What's one thing you'd want us to do to feel closer, even so far apart?" Her words were a balm, her poem a mirror of their shared defiance, and her question an invitation to strengthen their bridge.

Sunny smiled, typing, "I'd want us to make a shared playlist—one song from you, one from me, every week—to feel closer. 😄 What's your idea to stay connected?" Sending it felt like laying another plank across their ocean, a promise to mend and grow. The weight of his parents' expectations—Neha, the bank job—loomed, but Anastasia's words drowned them out, a reminder that their bond could weather arguments and distance. As he awaited her reply, the Delhi night felt softer, their amends a beacon lighting the path ahead, together.

Chapter 39: Dreams of Meeting

The Delhi night was draped in a quiet calm, the post-Diwali streets of South Delhi softened by a cool October breeze that carried the faint scent of jasmine and distant smoke. It was 2:30 AM, October 19, 2025, and the Singh household was deep in sleep, the only sounds the creak of Sunny's ceiling fan and the occasional bark of a stray dog outside. He sat on his bed, propped against pillows, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 10:00 PM: "A shared playlist? I love that, Sunny! 😊 Let's start with one song each—what's yours? Mine's 'Oblivion' by Labrinth, for our dreamy talks. Also, I keep imagining us meeting—what's it like to picture that for you?"

Her words, warm and hopeful, reignited the spark that their recent argument had briefly dimmed. The video call where they'd made amends had left Sunny buoyant, her forgiveness and shared poem weaving their bond tighter. But her question about meeting stirred a new intensity, a dream that felt both exhilarating and daunting against the backdrop of his parents' suspicions. Priya had caught him smiling at his phone during a family errand today, her voice sharp: "Sunny, beta, what's keeping you so distracted?" Rajinder's stern glance had followed, a silent reminder of Neha and the "stable future" they envisioned. Yet Anastasia's message was a refuge, pulling him toward a future they could dream together.

Sunny typed, his heart racing with the vividness of the fantasy: "Love 'Oblivion'—it's perfect for us. 😄 My song's 'Yeh Dil Deewana'—Bollywood, chaotic, like my heart thinking of you. Imagining meeting you? I see us at my chai stall, you trying golgappas, laughing at the spice. Or maybe your canal, me tripping on the snow. 😅 What's meeting me like in your head?" He hit send, attaching the song, the image of their meeting blooming in his

mind—her blonde hair under a Delhi sunset, his nervous grin by her Saint Petersburg canal. The 4,000 miles felt conquerable in this moment of shared dreams.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The idea of meeting Anastasia was a bold leap, one that clashed with the weight of his parents' expectations—Neha's family, the bank job, the life they'd scripted. But her question made it real, a possibility that fueled his courage to defy that script. He pictured her in Saint Petersburg, maybe curled up with her notebook, smiling at his message, her world of snow and poetry as vivid as his chaotic Delhi.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Yeh Dil Deewana is so fun—pure Delhi energy! 😊 Meeting you? I see us by the Neva River, you trying pelmeni, me laughing when you mispronounce it. Or in Delhi, you showing me your rooftops, us sharing dreams under fireworks. What's one thing you'd want to do first if we really met?" Her words painted a scene so vivid it felt tangible, their shared playlist and dreams of meeting a bridge across the distance.

Sunny typed, "First thing? I'd hug you—make it real after all these pixels. 😊 Then we'd explore together, your pick or mine. What's your first thing?" Sending it felt like a vow, a dream taking shape against the odds. The weight of his parents' suspicions lingered, but Anastasia's message was a beacon, lighting a path toward a meeting that could redefine his world. As he awaited her reply, the Delhi night hummed with possibility, their bond a promise that dreams could outshine any distance or doubt.

Chapter 40: Visa Worries Emerge

The Delhi morning was crisp, the October sun casting a golden glow over South Delhi's bustling streets, where vendors hawked fresh fruits and the air carried the faint sweetness of post-Diwali calm. It was 10:30 AM, October 20, 2025, and the Singh household was stirring—Priya in the kitchen preparing breakfast, Rajinder reading the newspaper, Simran still asleep. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's hum blending with the distant honks outside, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:00 AM: "A hug to start? Oh, Sunny, I'd love that. 😊 First thing for me? I'd read you a poem by my canal, see your face as you listen. But… I looked up traveling to India, and visas look complicated. Ever thought about how we'd actually meet?"

Her words, warm with the dream of meeting, carried a new edge—a practical worry that grounded their fantasies. The idea of visas hadn't crossed Sunny's mind until now, but it hit like a cold gust, stirring unease. His parents' suspicions were already a looming shadow; yesterday, Priya had lingered by his room, asking pointedly, "Sunny, beta, who are you always texting? No secrets, okay?" Rajinder's gruff reminder about meeting Neha's family soon had followed, tightening the knot of expectations. Anastasia's mention of visas added a new layer of reality to their dream, one that felt both thrilling and daunting.

Sunny typed, fingers hesitant: "Reading your poem by the canal sounds perfect, Anastasia. 😄 Visas, yeah… I hadn't thought about it, but it's scary—paperwork, money, all that. I'd want to come to Saint Petersburg, see your world. Have you looked into it much? What's the hardest part for you?" He hit send, his heart racing with a mix of hope and anxiety. The 4,000

miles between them had always been a romantic challenge, but visas made it tangible—a bureaucratic hurdle that could test their bond.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe watching the early snow as she read his message. Their shared dreams—his films, her poems, their imagined meetings—had felt boundless, but visas introduced a new reality. His parents' expectations—Neha, the bank job—were a different kind of barrier, one he was dodging with every secret chat. The thought of navigating visas to see Anastasia felt like a bold step, one that could either solidify their connection or expose its fragility.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "I looked a bit—Russian visas for India are tough, lots of forms, costs. 😔 The hardest part? Knowing my parents would question why I'd go so far. But I'd do it to meet you. What's the hardest part for you, Sunny?" Her words mirrored his fears, the practical and emotional hurdles intertwining. The image of her braving bureaucracy for him made his chest ache with gratitude and determination.

Sunny typed, "Hardest part? Explaining it to my parents—they'd never understand me going to Russia for 'someone I met online.' 😅 But I'd figure it out for you. What's one step we could take to make meeting real?" Sending it felt like a leap, a commitment to face the visa worries together. The weight of his parents' suspicions—Priya's probing, Rajinder's warnings—loomed, but Anastasia's message was a spark, igniting a resolve to turn their dreams into reality. As he awaited her reply, the Delhi morning buzzed with possibility, their bond a bridge daring to span both distance and doubt.

Chapter 41: Parental Confrontations

The Delhi morning was alive with the hum of a typical Sunday, the October sun casting a warm glow over South Delhi's streets, where vendors called out and temple bells chimed faintly. It was 11:00 AM, October 20, 2025, and the Singh household was bustling—Priya chopping vegetables in the kitchen, Rajinder discussing politics with a neighbor over chai, Simran texting friends in her room. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's hum a steady backdrop, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:30 AM: "One step to make meeting real? Maybe researching visa forms together, Sunny—it feels less scary with you. 😊 My parents would freak if they knew, though. How would yours react if you told them about me?"

Her question landed like a stone in Sunny's chest, stirring the tension that had been building for days. His parents' suspicions had reached a boiling point yesterday when Priya caught him smiling at his phone during a family errand, her voice sharp: "Sunny, enough with that phone! Who is it you're always talking to?" Rajinder had piled on, "No secrets, beta. The Sharmas are expecting you to meet Neha again soon." The pressure to conform—Neha, the bank job, tradition—was suffocating, and Anastasia's question forced him to face the confrontation he'd been dodging.

He typed, his fingers heavy with dread: "Researching visas together sounds perfect, Anastasia—makes it feel possible. 😄 My parents? They'd lose it—say you're a 'distraction,' wrong culture. I'm scared to tell them, but I want to. Have you thought about telling yours?" He hit send, his heart racing. The 4,000 miles between Delhi and Saint Petersburg felt both

vast and irrelevant—vast because of the looming confrontation, irrelevant because of the bond they'd built through shared dreams and vulnerabilities.

Before he could settle into waiting for her reply, a knock on his door jolted him. Priya stood there, her sari neatly draped, her expression a mix of concern and resolve. "Sunny, we need to talk," she said, stepping inside, Rajinder following, his face stern. Sunny's stomach dropped as he slipped his phone under a textbook, the screen still glowing with Anastasia's message.

"Beta, you're always on that phone," Priya began, her voice low but firm. "We're worried. Is it a girl? Someone not right for you?" Rajinder crossed his arms, adding, "The Sharmas are serious about Neha. She's from a good family, same values. You need to focus on your future, not distractions."

Sunny's throat tightened, Anastasia's question about telling his parents echoing in his mind. The confrontation he'd feared was here, and the weight of their expectations—Neha, tradition, duty—felt like a wall closing in. "It's just friends, Ma, Dad," he said, his voice unsteady. "College stuff." The lie tasted bitter, but the truth—Anastasia, his dreams of filmmaking, a life beyond their plans—felt too dangerous to voice.

Priya's eyes narrowed. "No secrets, Sunny. We've worked hard for you to have a good life." Rajinder nodded. "No more hiding. Tell us what's going on."

Sunny's phone buzzed under the book, a faint reminder of Anastasia waiting across the miles. He nodded, promising to "focus," but as his parents left, the confrontation left him shaken. Back alone, he opened her reply: "Telling my parents? I'm terrified they'd say you're not 'serious.' 😔 But I want to be brave for us. What happened with yours today?" Her words were a lifeline, pulling him from the edge.

He typed, "They just confronted me—think I'm hiding something. Scared to tell them about you, but I want to be brave too. 😊 Let's plan that visa step—what's first?" Sending it was a small act of defiance, a step toward facing the confrontation head-on. As he awaited her reply, the Delhi morning felt charged with tension and hope, their bond a beacon against the storm of parental expectations.

Chapter 42: Anastasia's Defiance

The Delhi afternoon sun blazed through the curtains of Sunny's South Delhi room, casting sharp shadows across his cluttered desk. It was 2:00 PM, October 21, 2025, and the Singh household was in a rare lull—Priya out visiting a neighbor, Rajinder at the bank, Simran at a friend's place. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan's hum a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 9:30 AM: "Sunny, that sounds so intense with your parents. 😔 I told my mom I'm not interested in her 'perfect match' guy—she was furious, said I'm throwing away my future. But I feel free, even if it's scary. Visa step? Let's look up requirements online tonight. What happened after your parents confronted you?"

Her defiance, bold and raw, sent a jolt through Sunny. The image of her standing up to her mother, rejecting the scripted life, mirrored his own yearning to break free. Yesterday's confrontation with his parents still stung—Priya's probing eyes, Rajinder's stern warning about Neha and "no secrets." He'd dodged their questions, but the tension lingered, their suspicions a tightening noose. Anastasia's courage was a spark, urging him to find his own.

He typed, fingers fueled by her bravery: "Anastasia, you're amazing for standing up to your mom! 😊 After the confrontation, I just nodded, lied about 'college stuff.' Felt awful, but I'm not ready to tell them about you. Let's do the visa research—maybe a video call tonight? How did it feel to defy her?" He hit send, his heart racing with a mix of admiration and resolve. The 4,000 miles between them felt like nothing when her defiance echoed his own unspoken rebellion.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in Saint Petersburg, maybe sipping coffee by her window, her notebook open with poems of freedom. Her courage made his own dreams—filmmaking, a life with choices—feel closer, even as his parents' expectations loomed. The Sharma family had called again this morning, Priya beaming about Neha's "qualities." Sunny had mumbled agreement, but his thoughts were on Anastasia, her defiance a beacon lighting his path.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Defying her felt like breathing after holding my breath—scary but alive. 😊 Mom's still upset, but I'm done pretending. Video call tonight sounds perfect—7 PM my time, 11:30 PM yours? What's one thing you'd say to your parents if you were as brave as you want to be?" Her words were a call to action, her question daring him to match her courage.

Sunny's chest tightened, the weight of his parents' expectations clashing with the pull of his dreams. He typed, "7 PM your time works! 😄 If I were brave, I'd tell them I'm choosing my own path—filmmaking, maybe even you—no matter what they think. What's one thing you'd say to your mom now?" Sending it felt like a vow to step toward defiance, inspired by her strength. The thought of their video call, planning visa steps together, made the distance feel conquerable.

Outside, Delhi's afternoon buzzed—vendors shouting, scooters honking—but in his room, Anastasia's defiance was a quiet revolution, pushing him to face his fears. As he awaited her reply, the spark of their bond burned brighter, a promise that their shared courage could bridge any ocean, even as his parents' suspicions threatened to close in.

Chapter 43: Sunny's Inner Turmoil

The Delhi evening was cloaked in a gentle October warmth, the streets of South Delhi alive with the hum of evening vendors and the distant chatter of neighbors winding down. It was 8:00 PM, October 21, 2025, and the Singh household was settling into a quiet routine—Priya in the kitchen reheating leftovers, Rajinder flipping through a financial magazine, Simran texting in her room. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak blending with the soft glow of his phone, where Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, sent at 3:30 PM her time, pulsed with a mix of courage and vulnerability: "Saying that to my mom would be huge, Sunny—choosing you and your films? That's fearless! 😊 I'd tell her I'm chasing my poems

and love, no matter what she thinks. Can't wait for our call tonight to plan those visa steps! What's one fear holding you back from being that brave?"

Her words, brimming with support, stirred a storm in Sunny's chest. The video call they'd planned for 11:30 PM his time—7:00 PM hers—loomed like a beacon, a chance to plot their dreams against the odds. But her question about fear dug deep, unearthing the turmoil he'd been wrestling since his parents' confrontation. Priya's sharp eyes and Rajinder's stern warnings about Neha and "distractions" had left him on edge; just this morning, Priya had lingered by his door, asking, "Sunny, beta, are you hiding something? We only want what's best." The lie he'd told—"Just college stuff, Ma"—felt heavier each time, and Anastasia's defiance pushed him to confront the fear holding him back.

He typed, fingers trembling with the weight of his inner storm: "Anastasia, your courage is unreal. 😄 My biggest fear? That if I tell them about you or my filmmaking dreams, they'll cut me off—not just emotionally, but from the family. It's like choosing me means losing them. How do you push past that kind of fear?" He hit send, his heart racing. The 4,000 miles between Delhi and Saint Petersburg felt like nothing compared to the chasm between his dreams and his parents' expectations. Anastasia's strength was a lifeline, but the turmoil within—guilt, fear, longing—threatened to pull him under.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe preparing for their call, her notebook open with poems of defiance. Her courage in standing up to her mother made his own hesitation feel like a betrayal of their bond. The thought of telling his parents about her—a Russian girl, a digital connection—seemed impossible, yet the idea of losing her to their expectations was unbearable. His phone buzzed, and her reply glowed: "Oh, Sunny, that fear's so heavy—I feel it too. 😔 I push past it by remembering my poems are my truth, and no one can take that. Our call tonight—let's dream big, okay? What's one thing you'd tell your parents if you knew they'd listen?"

Her words were a gentle push, urging him to face his turmoil head-on. Sunny's mind raced, the weight of his parents' expectations clashing with the pull of his dreams—filmmaking, Anastasia, a life he chose. He typed, "If they'd listen, I'd say I want to make films and love who I choose, even if it's across the world. 😊 What's one thing you'd tell your mom if she'd really hear you?" Sending it felt like a small step toward courage, a rehearsal for the confrontation he knew was coming.

Outside, Delhi's evening hummed, but inside, Sunny's turmoil churned. The upcoming call with Anastasia, their shared visa plans, was a spark of hope, but the fear of losing his family loomed large. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like the only anchor in his storm, a promise that their dreams could outshine even the deepest fears.

Chapter 44: Strengthening Resolve

The Delhi night was wrapped in a soft October chill, the streets of South Delhi quiet save for the occasional hum of a late-night scooter and the faint jingle of a neighbor's wind chimes. It was 11:00 PM, October 21, 2025, and the Singh household was asleep, the day's routine of errands and family chatter faded into silence. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with anticipation for the video call with Anastasia, set to start in

half an hour. Her latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:30 PM, pulsed on his screen: “Sunny, saying that to your parents would be so brave! 😊 If my mom would listen, I’d tell her my poems are my life, and I want to love who I choose, no matter where they’re from. Let’s make tonight’s call about our dreams—visa steps and all. What’s one dream you’re holding onto right now?”

Her words, full of courage and warmth, fueled a fire in Sunny, strengthening his resolve against the inner turmoil that had plagued him since his parents’ confrontation. Priya’s probing questions and Rajinder’s stern warnings about Neha and “distractions” lingered—today, at lunch, Priya had caught him checking his phone, her voice sharp: “Sunny, beta, no more secrets. Tell us what’s going on.” He’d deflected with a weak excuse about college, but the weight of their suspicions was crushing. Anastasia’s message, though, was a lifeline, her defiance against her own family’s expectations inspiring him to hold fast to his dreams.

He typed, fingers steady with newfound determination: “Your poems and love—that’s so powerful, Anastasia. 😄 My dream right now? Making a film that tells my story, and maybe meeting you by your canal someday. Can’t wait to plan those visa steps tonight. What’s your biggest dream right now?” He hit send, his heart racing with the clarity her words brought. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a challenge they could face together, their bond a shield against the pressures of Delhi’s expectations.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe preparing for their call, her blue eyes bright with the same resolve he felt. Their shared rebellion—his filmmaking, her poetry—was a quiet revolution, and her question about dreams pushed him to hold tighter to his own. The fear of losing his family still gnawed, but her courage made him believe he could face it, one bold step at a time.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia’s reply: “A film of your story? I’d watch it a million times, Sunny! 😊 My biggest dream is publishing my poems and traveling to see you—Delhi’s chaos sounds like home with you. Let’s start with visa sites tonight—what’s one thing you hope we’ll plan?” Her words were a spark, igniting his resolve further. The image of her in Delhi, sharing golgappas, made his chest ache with hope.

Sunny typed, “I hope we’ll plan a real step—like finding the right visa form or saving money for it. 😄 What’s one thing you hope we’ll figure out?” Sending it felt like locking in his resolve, a commitment to their shared future. The weight of his parents’ suspicions—Priya’s glances, Rajinder’s warnings—loomed, but the upcoming call with Anastasia was a beacon, strengthening his courage to dream beyond Delhi’s confines. As he prepared for their call, the Delhi night felt alive with possibility, their bond a promise that their resolve could bridge any distance or doubt.

Chapter 45: Cultural Misunderstandings

The Delhi night was steeped in a gentle October stillness, the post-Diwali streets of South Delhi quiet save for the faint hum of late-night traffic and the occasional chirp of crickets. It was 12:30 AM, October 22, 2025, and the Singh household was asleep, the day’s bustle of family errands and Priya’s cooking faded into silence. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan’s creak

blending with the soft glow of his phone, where the video call with Anastasia had just ended. Their talk—planning visa steps and dreaming of meeting—had been electric, but a misunderstanding had crept in, leaving a lingering tension. Her latest text, sent from Saint Petersburg at 8:00 PM, pulsed on his screen: “Sunny, I loved our call, but when you said my poetry might be ‘too soft’ for Delhi, it stung a bit. 😔 I thought you got it. Can we clear this up? Also, what’s one thing about my culture you don’t understand?”

Her words, tinged with hurt, hit Sunny like a cold breeze. During their call, he’d jokingly said her poems might get “lost in Delhi’s chaos,” meaning the city’s intensity, but it came out wrong, sounding dismissive. The misunderstanding stung, especially after the courage they’d shared. His parents’ suspicions were also tightening—Priya had hovered over him at dinner, noticing his distracted smile, her voice sharp: “Sunny, beta, you’re always on that phone. Is it serious?” Rajinder’s grunt about Neha’s family had followed, piling on the pressure. Now, Anastasia’s message forced him to face the gap between their worlds.

He typed, fingers heavy with regret: “Anastasia, I’m so sorry—I didn’t mean your poetry’s too soft, just that Delhi’s loud and chaotic. Your poems are beautiful, they’d shine anywhere. 😊 One thing I don’t get? Maybe how Russian families are so formal—mine are loud, emotional. What’s one thing about Indian culture you don’t understand?” He hit send, his heart racing. The 4,000 miles between them felt wider tonight, their cultural differences a new hurdle in their bond.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe by her window, snow falling as she read his apology. Their bond—built on shared dreams and defiance—had weathered an argument before, but this misunderstanding felt different, a reminder of how their worlds could clash. His parents’ expectations—Neha, the bank job—loomed, but the thought of losing Anastasia to a misstep was worse.

His phone buzzed. Her reply: “Thanks for explaining, Sunny—I overreacted, I think. 😊 Delhi’s chaos sounds intense, but I’d love to see it. Indian culture? I don’t get arranged marriages—how do people choose love like that? In Russia, it’s more about ‘proper’ matches, but still rigid. What happened with your parents today?” Her forgiveness was a relief, her question about arranged marriages mirroring his own discomfort with tradition.

Sunny typed, “Arranged marriages feel like a contract here—my parents are pushing one, and it’s suffocating. 😔 They grilled me again tonight, think I’m hiding something. Your formal matches sound similar, though. How do you deal with that rigidity?” Sending it felt like rebuilding their bridge, acknowledging their cultural misunderstandings while leaning into their shared rebellion. The Delhi night hummed outside, his parents’ suspicions a shadow, but Anastasia’s words were a light, guiding him through the gap. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt stronger for facing the misunderstanding, a testament to their willingness to bridge even the trickiest divides.

Chapter 46: Gifts from Afar

The Delhi morning was vibrant with the hum of a Sunday in South Delhi, the October air carrying the scent of fresh parathas from street vendors and the faint jingle of temple bells. It was 10:30 AM, October 26, 2025, and the Singh household was bustling—Priya in the

kitchen preparing brunch, Rajinder reading the newspaper, Simran scrolling through her phone in the living room. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's hum blending with the city's pulse, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:00 AM: "Sunny, I'm glad we cleared things up—our worlds are different, but we make it work. 😊 I was thinking, let's send each other a small gift—something tiny but meaningful from our cities. What would you pick for me from Delhi?"

Her words, warm and reconciliatory after their recent misunderstanding about cultural differences, sparked a warmth in Sunny's chest. The idea of exchanging gifts felt like a tangible step toward bridging their 4,000-mile gap, a way to share their worlds beyond words. But the shadow of his parents' suspicions lingered—yesterday, Priya had noticed his distracted texting during a family outing, her voice sharp: "Sunny, beta, what's so important on that phone?" Rajinder's stern reminder about meeting Neha's family soon had followed, tightening the knot of expectations. Anastasia's suggestion was a welcome escape, a chance to deepen their bond.

Sunny typed, a smile spreading as he imagined her reaction: "A gift from Delhi? I'd send you a small silver bangle from Chandni Chowk—simple, shiny, like the city's heart. 😄 What would you send me from Saint Petersburg?" He hit send, picturing her wearing the bangle by her snowy canal, her blue eyes bright with delight. The idea of a physical gift crossing oceans made their connection feel more real, despite the pressures of his parents' expectations and the looming reality of Neha.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, envisioning Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe sipping tea as dawn broke over the city. Their bond, strengthened by navigating misunderstandings and sharing dreams, was now ready for this new gesture. The thought of a gift from her world—something touched by her hands—made his heart race, even as his parents' suspicions cast a shadow. Priya's probing glances and Rajinder's warnings about "distractions" were growing harder to dodge, but Anastasia's message was a lifeline, pulling him toward hope.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "A Chandni Chowk bangle? I'd wear it every day, Sunny! 😊 I'd send you a small matryoshka doll from a Saint Petersburg market—tiny, colorful, full of stories like my city. What's one thing you'd want to do with my gift when you get it?" Her words painted a vivid picture, the matryoshka doll a piece of her world he could hold. Her question deepened the gesture, inviting him to imagine their connection in tangible form.

Sunny typed, "I'd keep your matryoshka on my desk, open it when I need to feel close to you. 😄 I'd want you to wear the bangle and think of Delhi's chaos. What would you do with my gift?" Sending it felt like sealing a promise, their gifts a bridge across the distance. The weight of his parents' expectations—Neha, the bank job—loomed, but Anastasia's words were a spark, igniting a hope that their bond could outshine any pressure. As he awaited her reply, the Delhi morning buzzed with possibility, their gifts from afar a testament to a connection growing stronger with every shared dream.

Chapter 47: The Language Barrier Breaks

The Delhi evening was alive with the hum of South Delhi's vibrant streets, the October air carrying the scent of roasted corn and the faint jingle of cycle rickshaw bells. It was 7:30 PM, October 26, 2025, and the Singh household was settling into a post-Sunday routine—Priya tidying the kitchen after dinner, Rajinder watching a news debate, Simran texting friends in her room. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan's creak blending with the city's pulse, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 3:00 PM: "Wearing your bangle and thinking of Delhi's chaos? I'd love that, Sunny! 😊 I'd keep it on while writing poems, feeling your city's energy. I was practicing some Hindi phrases today—'tum kaise ho?'—how's my accent? Let's teach each other a phrase from our languages!"

Her playful words, brimming with warmth, sparked a lightness in Sunny, a chance to deepen their bond beyond the gifts they'd planned to exchange. The idea of teaching each other their languages felt like breaking a new barrier, making their 4,000-mile gap feel smaller. But the shadow of his parents' suspicions loomed—Priya had caught him texting during dinner, her voice sharp: "Sunny, beta, enough with that phone. Are you hiding something?" Rajinder's gruff mention of Neha's family planning a visit soon had tightened the pressure. Anastasia's message was a welcome escape, a bridge across their worlds.

Sunny grinned, typing, "Your Hindi's adorable, Anastasia! 😄 'Tum kaise ho' is perfect—accent's probably better than mine. I'd keep your matryoshka by my sketchbook, thinking of your canals. Try this Russian phrase for me: 'Kak dela?' How'd I do? Teach me one more!" He hit send, imagining her laughing in her Saint Petersburg apartment, practicing Hindi under the soft glow of her lamp. The thought of her voice wrapping around his language made his heart race, even as his parents' expectations weighed heavy.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia by her snowy canal, her blonde hair catching the light as she tried his words. Their bond, strengthened by shared dreams and recent amends, was now weaving their languages into its fabric. The memory of Priya's probing glance and Rajinder's stern warnings about "distractions" lingered, but this playful exchange felt like a quiet rebellion, a way to claim his own story.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Kak dela? Not bad, Sunny! 😊 Your accent would make me smile. Try this: 'Ya tebya lyublyu'—it means 'I love you' in Russian. Too bold? 😅 Hindi phrase for me? Also, my mom asked about my 'new friend' today—got nervous! What's up with your parents?" Her words were a jolt, the Russian phrase sending a warm flush through him. The mention of her mother's suspicion echoed his own parents' scrutiny, making their shared defiance feel even more urgent.

Sunny typed, heart pounding, "Ya tebya lyublyu? Bold, but I like it! 😄 My Russian accent's probably awful. Try this Hindi phrase: 'Mujhe tumse baat karna pasand hai'—means 'I like talking to you.' My parents are pushing Neha hard, getting suspicious about my phone. 😔 Teach me another Russian phrase?" Sending it felt like a leap, their language exchange a new layer of intimacy. The Delhi night hummed outside, his parents' expectations a looming shadow, but Anastasia's words were a spark, breaking the language barrier and lighting a path toward a future they could share. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt stronger, a testament to their ability to connect across any divide.

Chapter 48: Shared Aspirations

The Delhi night was cloaked in a gentle October hush, the streets of South Delhi quiet save for the soft hum of late-night traffic and the occasional rustle of leaves in the breeze. It was 9:00 PM, October 26, 2025, and the Singh household was winding down—Priya and Rajinder watching a Bollywood rerun in the living room, Simran's room silent as she slept. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan's creak a familiar rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 4:30 PM: "Sunny, 'Mujhe tumse baat karna pasand hai'—I love that! 😊 My Hindi's shaky, but I'm trying. Try this Russian phrase: 'Mechty sbyvayutsya'—'Dreams come true.' My mom's still asking about my 'friend,' and it's stressful. How do you handle your parents' pressure? Also, what's one big aspiration we could share?"

Her words, warm and daring, wove their bond tighter, the playful language exchange now deepening into shared dreams. The Russian phrase—'Dreams come true'—felt like a promise, but her mention of her mother's suspicions mirrored the growing tension in Sunny's world. At dinner, Priya had caught him glancing at his phone, her voice sharp: "Sunny, beta, no more secrets. Is it a girl?" Rajinder's stern nod and mention of Neha's family visiting soon had left Sunny reeling. Anastasia's question about a shared aspiration was a lifeline, pulling him toward hope amidst the pressure.

Sunny typed, his heart racing with a mix of excitement and resolve: "Your Hindi's adorable, Anastasia! 😄 'Mechty sbyvayutsya'—hope I said that right. My parents are relentless—pushing Neha, watching my every move. I handle it by escaping into our chats. One shared aspiration? Creating something together—a film with your poems as the heart, maybe. What's your big shared dream?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe by her window, snow dusting the canals as she smiled at his message. The idea of a joint creation felt like a bold step, a way to merge their worlds despite the 4,000 miles and their parents' expectations.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. Their bond, strengthened by language exchanges and mutual defiance, was now a space where aspirations could take root. The thought of combining his filmmaking dreams with her poetry sparked a vision—a story of love and rebellion, filmed in Delhi's chaos and Saint Petersburg's quiet beauty. But his parents' suspicions—Priya's probing, Rajinder's warnings—cast a shadow, making every step toward Anastasia feel like a risk.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "A film with my poems? Sunny, that's incredible! 😊 I'd love that—our story, crossing borders. My shared dream? Traveling together, making art in every city we visit. My mom's pressure is heavy—she wants answers about my 'friend.' How do you keep your dreams alive under all that?" Her words were a spark, her vision of traveling and creating together igniting his own. Her struggle with her mother's scrutiny echoed his, tightening their connection.

Sunny typed, "Traveling and making art? That's our future, Anastasia! 😄 I keep my dreams alive by talking to you—you make them real. My parents are planning another Neha meeting, and it's suffocating. What's one thing we can do now to keep our aspiration alive?" Sending it felt like a vow, their shared dreams a shield against the pressures closing in. The

Delhi night hummed softly, his parents' expectations a looming weight, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path toward a future where their aspirations could soar. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt unbreakable, a promise that their dreams could outshine any distance or doubt.

Chapter 49: External Pressures Mount

The Delhi night was thick with the scent of rain-soaked earth, a rare October shower having passed through South Delhi, leaving the streets glistening and the air cooler than usual. It was 10:45 PM, October 26, 2025, and the Singh household was hushed, the echoes of dinner conversation faded into the walls. Priya and Rajinder had retired early, their murmurs about "Sunny's future" lingering like a fog in Sunny's mind. He lay on his bed, the fan's creak blending with the patter of residual raindrops outside, his phone a glowing anchor to Anastasia in Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:15 PM. Her latest message pulsed on his screen: "Traveling and creating art? That's our future, Sunny! 😄 I keep my dreams alive by talking to you—you make them real. My parents are planning another Neha meeting, and it's suffocating. What's one thing we can do now to keep our aspiration alive?"

Her words, full of hope, clashed with the mounting pressures closing in on Sunny. The dinner had been a battlefield of subtle jabs—Priya sliding a photo of Neha across the table, saying, "Such a lovely girl, beta, from a good family. The Sharmas want to meet next week." Rajinder had nodded, adding, "It's time to think seriously, Sunny. No more distractions—your BBA is ending soon, and a bank job awaits." Their eyes had bored into him, suspicions sharpening like knives. Sunny had forced a nod, his mind on Anastasia, but the weight of their expectations felt heavier than ever, suffocating his dreams of filmmaking and a life beyond Delhi's scripted paths.

He typed, fingers heavy with the turmoil brewing inside: "Anastasia, you're my light in this mess. 😊 One thing to keep our aspiration alive? Let's outline our joint project tonight—a story about two people defying borders for love and dreams. My parents' pressure is mounting—they're setting up a meeting with Neha's family. It feels like a trap. How's your mom's questioning going?" He hit send, his heart aching with the conflict. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a sanctuary, but the external pressures—families, cultures, expectations—were mounting, threatening to pull them apart.

As he waited, Sunny's mind raced. The Sharmas' insistence, relayed through his parents, was no longer subtle; they'd called twice this week, praising Neha's "stability" and hinting at alliances that would "secure the family legacy." Priya's worried glances and Rajinder's stern lectures about "honoring sacrifices" echoed in his ears, each word a chain binding him to a future he didn't want. And now, with Anastasia's mother probing about her "new friend," the pressures were mirroring across continents, testing their resolve.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Outlining our story? Yes, let's do that—maybe a film script with poems woven in! 😊 My mom's questions are getting worse—she found an app notification on my phone and grilled me about 'wasting time.' Said I need to focus on 'real prospects.' It's exhausting, but I won't let it stop us. How do we start our outline?" Her defiance shone through, but Sunny could sense the strain, the external forces mounting on her side too.

Sunny typed, resolve hardening against the tide: “Let’s start with the characters—us, basically. 😄 A Delhi guy and a Saint Petersburg girl, chasing dreams against family odds. I won’t let my parents’ pressure win either. Tell me more about your mom’s grilling—what did you say?” Sending it felt like a small act of rebellion, their shared aspirations a shield against the storm. The Delhi night pressed on, the rain easing, but the external pressures—families pushing “suitable” matches, societies demanding conformity—were mounting, a test of whether their bond could withstand the weight. As he awaited her reply, Sunny knew the battle was just beginning, but with Anastasia, he felt ready to fight.

Chapter 50: A Turning Point

The Delhi night was heavy with the promise of change, the October air thick with the remnants of a passing shower that had left the streets of South Delhi slick and reflective under streetlights. It was 11:30 PM, October 26, 2025, and the Singh household was silent, the weight of unspoken tensions hanging in the air like the humidity before a storm. Sunny paced his room, the fan’s creak a frantic accompaniment to his racing thoughts, his phone clutched in his hand as if it were a lifeline. Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 7:00 PM, glowed on his screen: “Outlining our story? Yes, let’s do that—maybe a film script with poems woven in! 😊 My mom’s questions are getting worse—she found an app notification on my phone and grilled me about ‘wasting time.’ Said I need to focus on ‘real prospects.’ It’s exhausting, but I won’t let it stop us. How do we start our outline?”

Her words, resilient yet strained, mirrored the mounting external pressures that had been building like dark clouds over their connection. For Sunny, the day had been a whirlwind of suffocating expectations—Priya had cornered him after lunch, her voice laced with suspicion: “Sunny, beta, the Sharmas called again. Neha’s parents want to arrange a formal meeting next week. It’s time to think about your future seriously.” Rajinder had joined in, his tone unyielding: “No more hiding behind that phone. We’ve seen the way you smile at it. If there’s something—or someone—distracting you, end it now. Honor the family.” The words had hit like a thunderclap, forcing Sunny to mumble assurances he didn’t feel, his mind screaming with the truth he couldn’t voice: Anastasia, his dreams of filmmaking, a life unbound by tradition.

The pressure had reached a boiling point, and as Sunny stared at Anastasia’s message, a turning point crystallized in his mind. He couldn’t keep living this double life—the guilt of deceiving his parents, the fear of losing Anastasia, the ache of suppressing his aspirations. His fingers trembled as he typed, the decision forming with each word: “Anastasia, your strength is what keeps me going. 😊 Let’s start the outline with our characters—a Delhi guy trapped by family duty, a Saint Petersburg girl chasing poetic freedom. But… I can’t do this anymore. My parents are forcing this Neha meeting, and it’s tearing me apart. I think I have to tell them about you, about us. Tonight. What do you think?”

He hit send, his breath catching as the message flew across the oceans. The room felt smaller, the fan’s hum louder, as if the world held its breath. This was it—a turning point where dreams collided with reality. If he told his parents, it could shatter everything: their

trust, his home, the fragile stability he'd known. But hiding felt like dying slowly, his aspirations suffocating under the weight of "suitable" matches and bank jobs.

His phone buzzed almost immediately. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, oh my god—telling them? That's huge, brave! 😊 I'm scared for you, but if it's what you need, I'm here. My mom's pressure is bad too—she wants me to meet that guy next week. Maybe we both stand up? Call me if you need to talk before you do it. I believe in us."

Her support was a spark in the darkness, but Sunny's turmoil raged on. He stood, glancing at the family photo on his desk—Priya's warm smile, Rajinder's proud gaze, Simran's knowing grin. Betraying them felt impossible, yet so did betraying himself. With a deep breath, he slipped out of his room, the hallway creaking under his feet as he headed to the living room, where the TV's glow still flickered. This was the turning point—no more secrets, no more running. The rain had stopped, but the storm was just beginning.

Chapter 51: Plans for the Future

The Delhi night was cloaked in a tense stillness, the streets of South Delhi quiet save for the occasional hum of a late-night auto-rickshaw and the faint rustle of leaves in the October breeze. It was 1:00 AM, October 27, 2025, and the Singh household was asleep, the weight of Sunny's decision to confront his parents hanging heavy in the air. He'd stood at the edge of the living room hours ago, heart pounding, ready to confess about Anastasia and his filmmaking dreams, but Priya's tired yawn and Rajinder's distracted nod at the TV had stopped him cold. The moment hadn't been right, but the resolve still burned. Now, back in his room, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowed with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 8:30 PM: "Sunny, I'm still thinking about you telling your parents—that's so brave! 😊 I didn't sleep much, worrying about you. Let's dream forward: if we could plan our future together, what's one thing you'd want for us in a year?"

Her words, a mix of support and hope, were a lifeline pulling Sunny from the edge of his fear. The weight of his parents' expectations—Neha's looming meeting, their suspicions about his phone—felt like a storm, but Anastasia's question about the future was a beacon, urging him to look beyond the immediate clash. He leaned against his pillows, the fan's hum blending with his racing thoughts, and typed, fingers steady with newfound clarity: "Anastasia, I chickened out telling them tonight—too heavy. 😔 But your support keeps me going. In a year? I'd want us working on our film together, maybe in Delhi or Saint Petersburg, visas sorted, just creating. What's your one thing for our future?" He hit send, his heart racing with the boldness of the vision. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a challenge they could conquer, their shared dreams a shield against the pressures closing in.

As he waited, Sunny pictured Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe curled up by her window, snow falling as she read his message. Their bond, forged through confessions, misunderstandings, and defiance, was now a space where they could plan a future, however uncertain. The memory of Priya's sharp glance at his phone during yesterday's dinner and Rajinder's stern words about Neha—"She's a good match, Sunny, don't ruin this"—loomed, but Anastasia's question pushed him to imagine a life where his dreams, and theirs, could breathe.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Oh, Sunny, it's okay—you'll find the right moment. 😊 A film together? That's perfect! In a year, I'd want us traveling, maybe me in Delhi, you in Saint Petersburg, sharing our art—my poems published, your film in progress. What's one step we can take now to make that future real?" Her vision, vibrant and bold, mirrored his own, her support a spark igniting his courage.

Sunny typed, "Traveling and creating together? That's our dream, Anastasia! 😄 One step now? Let's start a shared doc for our film-poem project—outline the story, maybe apply for visas. What's your step?" Sending it felt like planting a seed, a tangible move toward their future. The weight of his parents' suspicions and the looming Neha meeting pressed hard, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him toward a path where their plans could take root. As he awaited her reply, the Delhi night hummed with possibility, their bond a promise that their future could outshine the fears and pressures of today.

Chapter 52: Family Ultimatums

The Delhi morning was alive with the hum of a typical Sunday, the October sun casting a warm glow over South Delhi's bustling streets, where vendors shouted and temple bells chimed faintly. It was 11:00 AM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was tense with unspoken expectations. Priya was in the kitchen, preparing an elaborate brunch for relatives, while Rajinder reviewed a stack of papers at the dining table, his brow furrowed. Simran was out with friends, leaving Sunny alone at his desk, the fan's creak a restless rhythm against the weight of last night's indecision. His phone glowed with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:30 AM: "A shared doc for our film-poem project? I'm in, Sunny! 😊 Let's start it tonight. I'm nervous—my mom's pushing that guy again, says it's 'time to be serious.' What's one thing we should put in our story first? Also, any update with your parents?"

Her words, brimming with hope, clashed with the storm brewing in Sunny's world. His failure to confront his parents about Anastasia and his dreams last night had left him restless, and the pressure was mounting. At breakfast, Priya had dropped a bombshell, her voice calm but unyielding: "Sunny, beta, the Sharmas are coming tomorrow. They want to discuss a formal engagement with Neha. It's time to decide." Rajinder had added, "No more distractions, Sunny. This is your future—don't throw it away." The ultimatum had hit like a thunderbolt, their suspicions about his phone now a direct challenge to choose their path or face consequences.

Sunny's heart pounded as he typed, fingers trembling with the weight of the moment: "Anastasia, your mom's pressure sounds so tough—you're so strong for pushing back. 😊 For our story, let's start with a scene of our characters meeting by chance, defying their worlds. My parents dropped a bomb—Neha's family is coming tomorrow to talk engagement. It's an ultimatum, and I'm freaking out. What do I do?" He hit send, the confession spilling out like a dam breaking. The 4,000 miles between Delhi and Saint Petersburg felt like a chasm, yet Anastasia's support was a lifeline, pulling him toward courage.

As he waited, Sunny paced his room, the fan's hum blending with the chaos in his mind. The ultimatum—Neha, a bank job, a life scripted by his parents—was a wall closing in, threatening to crush his dreams of filmmaking and a future with Anastasia. Her shared doc

idea, their film-poem project, was a spark of hope, but the reality of tomorrow's meeting loomed large. Could he face his parents, tell them about her, and risk everything?

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, an engagement talk? Oh my gosh, that's huge. 😔 I'm here for you. A scene of a chance meeting? Perfect—our characters finding each other against all odds. Don't let their ultimatum stop you. Maybe tell them a little—say you're not ready? My mom's pushing too, but I told her I need time. What's one thing you could say to buy time?" Her words were a steady hand, her own defiance against her mother's pressure a mirror to his struggle.

Sunny typed, resolve hardening: "Thanks for being there, Anastasia. 😄 I could tell them I need to focus on my career first, delay the engagement talk. For our story, let's add a moment where they share a secret dream. What's your next step for our project?" Sending it felt like a small act of defiance, a step toward facing the ultimatum. The Delhi morning buzzed outside, his parents' expectations a looming storm, but Anastasia's support was a beacon, guiding him through the chaos. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like the only thing strong enough to weather the turning point ahead.

Chapter 53: Anastasia's Journey to India?

The Delhi afternoon was vibrant with the hum of South Delhi's streets, the October sun casting a golden glow over vendors hawking fruits and the faint clang of temple bells. It was 2:48 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a flurry of preparation for the Sharmas' visit tomorrow—Priya arranging sweets in the kitchen, Rajinder on the phone finalizing details, Simran helping reluctantly with decorations. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a restless rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 10:18 AM: "Sunny, buying time with 'career focus' is smart! 😊 For our story, a shared secret dream scene is perfect—maybe they whisper it by a river. My mom's still pushing that guy, but I said I'm not ready either. I looked up flights to India—crazy idea, but what if I came to Delhi? What would that be like for you?"

Her words hit Sunny like a bolt of lightning, both thrilling and terrifying. The idea of Anastasia in Delhi—her stepping into his chaotic world of rickshaws, chai stalls, and family pressures—was a dream he'd barely dared imagine. But the Sharmas' visit loomed, their talk of Neha's engagement a suffocating ultimatum. Priya had caught him texting this morning, her voice sharp: "Sunny, beta, no more distractions tomorrow. The Sharmas expect your full attention." Rajinder's stern nod had sealed the warning, making Anastasia's suggestion feel like a daring leap into the unknown.

Sunny typed, his heart racing with a mix of excitement and fear: "Anastasia, you in Delhi? That's wild! 😄 I'd show you Old Delhi's chaos, share golgappas, maybe sneak you to my rooftop. But my parents—they'd lose it if they knew. Flights sound amazing but scary. What made you think of coming here? Any real plans?" He hit send, picturing her in Chandni Chowk, her blonde hair catching the sunset as she laughed at the spice of street food. The 4,000 miles between them suddenly felt like a gap they could close, but the reality of visas, money, and his parents' suspicions loomed large.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his racing thoughts. Anastasia's courage—defying her mother, researching flights—mirrored his own desire to break free, but the practicalities were daunting. The Sharmas' visit tomorrow was a deadline, a moment where he'd have to face his parents' expectations head-on. Could he delay their plans, hold onto his dreams, and imagine Anastasia here without shattering everything?

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "I thought of it because I want to see your world, Sunny—feel the chaos you love. 😊 No real plans yet—just dreaming. Visas and flights are pricey, but I'd save up for it. My mom would flip, though. What would it be like if I showed up in Delhi? Would you tell your parents?" Her question was a spark, pushing him to imagine the impossible—her in his city, their bond no longer just pixels but real.

Sunny typed, resolve and fear colliding: "If you showed up? I'd be over the moon—take you everywhere, from markets to my chai stall. 😄 I'd want to tell my parents, but I'd need courage—they're so set on Neha. What's one thing you'd want to do first in Delhi?" Sending it felt like a step toward making her journey real, a defiance of the pressures closing in. The Delhi afternoon buzzed outside, the Sharmas' visit a looming storm, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path toward a future where their worlds could collide. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a daring promise, strong enough to face any ultimatum or distance.

Chapter 54: Sunny's Secret Savings

The Delhi afternoon was alive with the vibrant hum of South Delhi's streets, the October sun casting long shadows over bustling markets and the faint clink of temple bells. It was 3:30 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a whirlwind of preparation for the Sharmas' visit tomorrow—Priya arranging trays of sweets, Rajinder reviewing a guest list, Simran grudgingly polishing silverware. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a restless rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 11:00 AM: "First thing in Delhi? I'd want to try your chai stall's tea and hear you tell a story under those stars you talk about. 😊 Telling your parents sounds so scary, but I believe in you. If I came, what's one place you'd hide me from them? Also, any visa progress?"

Her words, brimming with warmth and daring, ignited a spark in Sunny, but the idea of her in Delhi—tangible, real—clashed with the suffocating pressure of tomorrow's meeting. Priya's sharp warning at lunch—"Sunny, beta, no phone tomorrow; the Sharmas expect respect"—and Rajinder's stern reminder about Neha's "perfect match" status had tightened the noose of expectations. Anastasia's mention of visas stirred a secret Sunny had been nurturing: a small savings account he'd started, tucked away from his parents' eyes, for dreams he barely dared name—filmmaking, travel, maybe even her.

He typed, fingers trembling with a mix of excitement and guilt: "Chai and stories under the stars? You'd love it, Anastasia! 😄 I'd hide you at Hauz Khas Village—quiet, artsy, far from my parents' radar. I've been saving a bit—small jobs, skipping outings—to maybe fund a filmmaking course or… a trip to you. No visa progress yet, but I'll look tonight. You saving too?" He hit send, his heart racing. The secret savings, hidden in an online account his parents didn't know about, felt like a quiet rebellion, a step toward the future Anastasia's

message painted. The 4,000 miles between them seemed shrinkable, but the Sharmas' visit loomed like a storm.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in Saint Petersburg, maybe sipping coffee as snow dusted her window, dreaming of Delhi. His savings—barely a few thousand rupees from tutoring and freelance gigs—were a fragile hope, but they symbolized his defiance against the life his parents planned: Neha, a bank job, tradition. The thought of using them for a visa or a ticket to see her felt both thrilling and terrifying.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Hauz Khas sounds like our kind of place! 😊 You're saving? That's huge, Sunny! I've got a little stash too—from tutoring English online. Maybe enough for a visa someday. My mom's still on about that guy, but I'm dreaming of Delhi instead. Where would you use your savings first—film course or travel?" Her words were a spark, her own secret savings mirroring his, their shared rebellion tightening their bond.

Sunny typed, resolve hardening: "Your stash makes me feel less crazy! 😄 I'd use mine for a film course first, but travel to you is a close second. Maybe we save together? What would you spend yours on first?" Sending it felt like a vow, their secret savings a tangible step toward their dreams. The Delhi afternoon buzzed outside, the Sharmas' visit a looming deadline, but Anastasia's words were a lifeline, fueling his courage to defy the ultimatum. As he awaited her reply, his secret savings felt like a seed planted, ready to grow into a future where their bond could outshine any pressure or distance.

Chapter 55: Cultural Festivals Shared

The Delhi evening was vibrant with the hum of South Delhi's streets, the October air carrying the scent of roasting peanuts and the faint echo of temple bells as the city settled into a post-Diwali rhythm. It was 7:00 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a flurry of anticipation for the Sharmas' visit tomorrow—Priya arranging a tray of mithai in the kitchen, Rajinder reviewing family finances, Simran texting friends while halfheartedly helping. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady pulse, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 2:30 PM: "Saving together? I'm in, Sunny! 😊 I'd spend my stash on a visa to Delhi first—see your world, then publish my poems. Your film course sounds amazing! Let's share a festival vibe—tell me about one you love in Delhi, and I'll share a Saint Petersburg one!"

Her words, brimming with excitement, were a bright spark against the looming shadow of tomorrow's meeting with Neha's family. Priya's sharp reminder at dinner—"Sunny, beta, no phone tomorrow; the Sharmas expect your full focus"—and Rajinder's stern nod about "securing the future" had tightened the knot of pressure. Anastasia's suggestion to share festivals felt like a lifeline, a way to weave their worlds closer despite the 4,000 miles and his parents' suspicions. His secret savings, tucked away for a filmmaking course or a trip to her, burned in his mind as a quiet rebellion.

Sunny typed, a smile breaking through his tension: "A visa to Delhi? That'd be unreal, Anastasia! 😄 I love Holi in Delhi—colors everywhere, water fights, dancing in the streets. It's chaos, but it's freedom. What's a Saint Petersburg festival you love?" He hit send, picturing her in Delhi's Holi madness, her blonde hair dusted with pink and blue powders,

laughing as they tossed colors. The thought of sharing festivals made their bond feel tangible, a bridge of shared joy amidst the weight of expectations.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. Holi's vibrance mirrored his dreams—wild, free, unscripted—while the Sharmas' visit tomorrow was the opposite, a scripted future of Neha and a bank job. Anastasia's world, with its snowy canals and poetic defiance, felt like a place where he could be himself. His phone buzzed, and her reply glowed: "Holi sounds like a dream, Sunny—colors and chaos! 😊 In Saint Petersburg, I love White Nights—music, art, the city glowing under endless twilight. It's magical, like my poems. What's one Holi moment you'd want us to share?"

Her words painted a vivid picture of Saint Petersburg's ethereal light, and her question deepened their connection, inviting him to imagine her in his world. Sunny typed, heart racing: "During Holi, I'd want us to sneak away to a rooftop, throw colors at each other, and laugh till we're breathless. 😄 What's one White Nights moment you'd share with me?" Sending it felt like a promise, their shared festivals a defiance of the pressures closing in—his parents' ultimatum, the Sharmas' expectations.

Outside, Delhi's evening buzzed, the weight of tomorrow's meeting heavy, but Anastasia's message was a spark, lighting a path toward a future where their worlds could collide. His secret savings, their shared dreams, and now their festival visions were threads in a tapestry strong enough to withstand the storm. As he awaited her reply, the Delhi night felt alive with possibility, their bond a vibrant promise that no ultimatum could dim.

Chapter 56: Doubts Creep In

The Delhi night was cloaked in a restless quiet, the October air carrying a faint chill and the distant hum of South Delhi's streets winding down. It was 10:30 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was still, the tension of the looming Sharma visit tomorrow hanging like a storm cloud. Priya and Rajinder had retired early, their earlier warnings about "no distractions" and Neha's "perfect match" echoing in Sunny's mind. He sat on his bed, the fan's creak a nervous rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:00 PM: "A Holi rooftop with colors? Oh, Sunny, I can see us laughing there! 😊 For White Nights, I'd take you to a jazz concert by the Neva River, dancing under the twilight. But… sometimes I wonder if we're dreaming too big. Do you ever doubt we can make this work with all the pressure?"

Her words, warm yet tinged with vulnerability, pierced Sunny's heart. The image of dancing with her under Saint Petersburg's endless twilight was vivid, but her question about doubt stirred a restlessness he'd been pushing down. The Sharmas' visit—Priya's insistence on a formal engagement talk, Rajinder's stern ultimatum to "end distractions"—felt like a wall closing in. Anastasia's mention of doubt mirrored his own creeping fears: could their bond, built on texts and dreams, survive visas, family pressures, and 4,000 miles?

Sunny typed, his fingers heavy with uncertainty: "Jazz by the Neva sounds perfect, Anastasia. 😄 But yeah, doubts creep in. My parents are pushing Neha so hard, and tomorrow's meeting feels like a trap. Sometimes I wonder if I'm crazy to think we can beat the distance and all this. Do you ever feel like it's too much?" He hit send, his chest tight with

the confession. Admitting doubt felt like cracking their bridge, but her honesty deserved his own, even as the weight of his parents' expectations and the Sharma visit loomed.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe staring at the snowy canal, her notebook open. Their bond—woven through shared festivals, secret savings, and defiance—had been a beacon, but the practicalities of visas and family pressures cast shadows. Priya's sharp glance at his phone during breakfast, Rajinder's warning about "honoring the family," replayed in his mind, fueling his doubts. Could he really defy them for a girl he'd never met in person?

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, I'm so glad you're honest—doubts hit me too. 😔 My mom's pushing that guy, saying I'm 'wasting my youth.' Sometimes I think the distance is impossible, but then I think of you, and I want to try. What's the biggest doubt holding you back right now?" Her vulnerability was a lifeline, pulling him back from the edge, her willingness to fight despite her fears reigniting his own resolve.

Sunny typed, heart racing: "Biggest doubt? That I'll lose my family if I choose you and my dreams. 😔 But talking to you makes me want to fight too. What's your biggest doubt?" Sending it felt like a recommitment, a choice to face the doubts together. The Delhi night hummed outside, the Sharma visit a looming storm, but Anastasia's words were a spark, reminding him their bond could weather the creeping fears. As he awaited her reply, their shared vulnerability felt like a new strength, a promise that doubts could be faced, not fled from.

Chapter 57: Reaffirming Love

The Delhi night was cloaked in a tense stillness, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets settled into a quiet hum, punctuated by the occasional bark of a stray dog. It was 11:15 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was asleep, the weight of tomorrow's Sharma visit—a looming engagement talk for Neha—hanging like a dark cloud over Sunny's room. He sat on his bed, the fan's creak a restless rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:45 PM: "Sunny, losing your family? That's such a heavy doubt. 😔 Mine's that I'll never be brave enough to leave my safe life for our dreams. But you make me want to try. Let's remind ourselves why we're fighting—what's one thing you love about us?"

Her words, raw and hopeful, cut through the fog of doubt that had crept into Sunny's heart. The Sharma visit, Priya's sharp warnings about his phone—"Sunny, beta, no secrets tomorrow"—and Rajinder's stern ultimatum to "choose the family's path" had left him rattled, questioning if their bond could survive the pressures. But Anastasia's question was a spark, pulling him back to the fire of their connection, urging him to reaffirm what made their 4,000-mile bridge worth defending.

Sunny typed, his fingers steadying with each word: "Anastasia, your courage gives me mine. 😊 One thing I love about us? How we share our truest selves—your poems, my films, no judgment. It's like you see the real me. What's one thing you love about us?" He hit send, his heart racing with a renewed warmth. The confession felt like a vow, a way to push back the doubts and the looming storm of the Sharma visit. Their bond, built on shared dreams,

secret savings, and now this reaffirmation, was a light in the darkness of his parents' expectations.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe by her window, snow falling as she read his message. The thought of her—defying her mother's push for a "proper match," dreaming of Delhi—made his doubts feel smaller. Priya's probing glances and Rajinder's warnings about Neha echoed, but Anastasia's words reminded him why he was fighting: for a life where he could be himself, with her.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Oh, Sunny, that's beautiful. 😊 I love how we make each other braver—like I can face my fears because you believe in me. Our talks feel like a safe place to dream. What's one moment we've shared that makes you want to keep going?" Her words were a warm embrace, her reaffirmation of their bond a shield against the pressures mounting on both sides—her mother's insistence, his parents' ultimatum.

Sunny typed, heart swelling: "That moment in our video call when we laughed about my terrible Russian accent—it felt like we were already together, no distance. 😄 It makes me want to fight for us. What's your moment?" Sending it felt like anchoring their love, a promise to hold fast against the doubts and external storms. The Delhi night hummed outside, the Sharma visit looming, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, reaffirming their love as a force stronger than any ultimatum or distance. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a fire reignited, ready to burn through the challenges ahead.

Chapter 58: The Visa Application

The Delhi night was cloaked in a restless quiet, the October air cool and tinged with the faint scent of rain-soaked earth from an earlier shower. It was 12:30 AM, October 13, 2025, and the Singh household was asleep, the tension of the impending Sharma visit—a formal engagement talk for Neha—hanging heavy in Sunny's room. He sat on his bed, the fan's creak a nervous rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 8:00 PM, October 12, 2025: "Sunny, that call where we laughed about your accent? It's my favorite too—like we were side by side. 😊 It makes me want to fight for us. Let's take a real step—looked at visa forms yet? I found a site for Russian tourist visas to India. What's one thing we need to start with?"

Her words, brimming with resolve and love, were a lifeline against the storm of doubts and pressures swirling around Sunny. The Sharma visit, set for later today, loomed like a guillotine—Priya's sharp warning at dinner, "Sunny, beta, no phone during the meeting; it's serious," and Rajinder's stern, "Neha's family expects commitment," had left him reeling. Anastasia's push to start the visa process felt like a bold leap, a tangible move toward their shared dream of meeting, but the practicalities—forms, costs, and his parents' suspicions—tightened the knot in his chest.

Sunny typed, his fingers trembling with a mix of excitement and fear: "Anastasia, that moment keeps me going too. 😄 I haven't checked visa forms yet, but I'll look now—thanks for the site! Let's start with the basics: passport details, maybe a budget for fees. My parents are all about Neha today, and it's terrifying. Have you started any visa steps?" He hit send, his heart racing as he opened a browser to search for Indian visa requirements for Russians,

the screen lighting up with forms and fees that felt daunting yet possible. The 4,000 miles between Delhi and Saint Petersburg seemed surmountable with her by his side, even as the Sharma visit threatened to crush his dreams.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, perhaps by her window, snow dusting the canals as she navigated visa websites. Their bond, reaffirmed through shared moments and defiance, was now pushing them toward action. His secret savings—small but growing from tutoring gigs—felt like a spark of hope, but the fear of his parents discovering his plans, or worse, rejecting Anastasia, gnawed at him. Priya's probing glances and Rajinder's ultimatums echoed, but her message was a beacon, guiding him forward.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, Neha's meeting sounds so heavy—I'm here for you. 😊 I checked my passport—it's valid, and I'm saving for visa fees. First step: we need invitation letters or hotel bookings for the application. My mom's still suspicious about my 'friend,' but I'm pushing forward. What's the scariest part of this visa stuff for you?" Her practical steps and unwavering support lit a fire in him, making the dream of meeting feel real despite the pressures.

Sunny typed, resolve hardening: "Anastasia, you're amazing for starting already! 😄 Scariest part? The cost—and explaining a trip to my parents. They'd freak about Russia. Let's find cheap hotels for the forms. What's scariest for you?" Sending it felt like locking in their commitment, the visa application a concrete step toward their future. The Delhi night hummed outside, the Sharma visit a looming storm, but Anastasia's words were a spark, fueling his courage to face the challenges ahead. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a bridge strong enough to span any distance or ultimatum.

Chapter 59: Waiting in Agony

The Delhi morning was cloaked in a tense haze, the October sun struggling to pierce through a thin veil of clouds over South Delhi's bustling streets. It was 11:00 AM, October 13, 2025, and the Singh household was a whirlwind of preparation for the Sharmas' visit, now just hours away. Priya was arranging a silver tray of sweets in the living room, her movements brisk, while Rajinder reviewed talking points for the engagement discussion, his voice low and serious. Simran, sensing the tension, stayed out of the way, texting in her room. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a restless pulse, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:30 AM: "Sunny, the visa costs are scary, but we'll figure it out together. 😊 Explaining to my parents is my biggest fear—they'd never get why I'd go to India. Cheap hotels sound good—let's pick one tonight. How are you holding up with the Neha meeting today?"

Her words, a blend of resolve and empathy, were a lifeline, but the weight of the impending Sharma visit made Sunny feel like he was drowning. Priya's sharp command at breakfast—"Sunny, beta, no phone today; this is about your future"—and Rajinder's stern warning, "Neha's family expects a clear answer," had left him in agony, his heart torn between his love for Anastasia and the fear of defying his parents. The visa application they'd discussed last night felt like a distant dream, a spark of hope buried under the crushing reality of today's confrontation.

Sunny typed, fingers trembling with anxiety: “Anastasia, your support keeps me sane. 😔 The Neha meeting’s in a few hours, and I’m terrified—they want an engagement decision. I can’t stop thinking about you, our visa plans, but I don’t know how to face them. Let’s pick a hotel tonight, yeah? How do you stay calm under this pressure?” He hit send, his chest tight with the agony of waiting—for the Sharmas, for his parents’ verdict, for a future with Anastasia. The 4,000 miles between them felt like an ocean, their bond a fragile raft against the storm of expectations.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe sipping tea as dawn broke over snowy canals. Their shared dream—visas, a film-poem project, meeting by her Neva or his chai stall—was a beacon, but the looming meeting with Neha’s family felt like a guillotine. His secret savings, the visa forms they’d researched, were steps toward freedom, but the fear of losing his family’s love gnawed at him. Priya’s probing glances and Rajinder’s ultimatums replayed, each word a weight in his chest.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia’s reply: “Sunny, I’m aching for you—that meeting sounds awful. 😔 I stay calm by writing poems, pouring out the fear. You’re so brave for facing this. Pick a Delhi hotel tonight, maybe near your chai stall? What’s one thing you’ll do to get through today?” Her empathy was a balm, her practical suggestion a reminder of their shared goal, but the agony of waiting for the Sharma visit pressed harder.

Sunny typed, heart pounding: “Writing helps you? You’re incredible, Anastasia. 😊 I’ll try sketching to calm down—maybe our characters’ meeting scene. Hotel near my chai stall sounds perfect. I’ll just nod and delay any engagement talk today. What’s one thing you’ll do to keep our dream alive today?” Sending it felt like clinging to their bond, a desperate act to hold onto hope. The Delhi morning buzzed outside, the Sharma visit a looming storm, but Anastasia’s words were a spark, easing his agony. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like the only anchor in the chaos, a promise to endure the wait and fight for their future.

Chapter 60: Unexpected Setbacks

The Delhi afternoon was heavy with the weight of anticipation, the October sun casting a muted glow through overcast skies over South Delhi’s bustling streets. It was 2:00 PM, October 13, 2025, and the Singh household was a tense stage for the imminent Sharma visit, now mere hours away. Priya was arranging a final spread of sweets and chai in the living room, her movements precise but strained, while Rajinder paced, muttering about “family honor.” Simran, sensing the storm, had slipped out to a friend’s house. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan’s creak a frantic rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 9:30 AM: “Sketching our characters? That’s so you, Sunny! 😊 I’m writing a poem about our dream today to keep it alive. Hotel near your chai stall sounds perfect—let’s pick one tonight. I’m rooting for you to get through this meeting. What’s one thing you’ll say if they push the engagement?”

Her words, warm and steady, were a lifeline, but a sudden setback had shaken Sunny’s resolve. Just an hour ago, while checking his secret savings account, he’d discovered a glitch—his bank had frozen the account due to “suspicious activity,” likely from irregular

deposits from his tutoring gigs. The funds, his fragile hope for a filmmaking course or a trip to Anastasia, were inaccessible, at least until he could visit the bank. The Sharma visit, with its looming engagement talk for Neha, felt like a tidal wave, and this financial setback was a gut punch, amplifying his agony. Priya's sharp warning at lunch—"Sunny, beta, no distractions today; the Sharmas expect commitment"—and Rajinder's stern, "This is your future, don't ruin it," echoed in his mind.

Sunny typed, his fingers heavy with frustration: "Anastasia, your poem sounds like it'll keep us strong. 😔 Bad news—my savings account got frozen, some bank glitch. It's a setback for our visa plans. If they push the engagement, I'll say I need time to focus on my career. Still up for picking a hotel tonight? How do you handle setbacks like this?" He hit send, his heart sinking. The 4,000 miles between Delhi and Saint Petersburg felt wider with his savings stalled, their dream of meeting teetering under the weight of this new obstacle and his parents' expectations.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe writing by her window, snow falling softly. Their bond—forged through shared dreams, defiance, and love—had weathered doubts, but this setback felt like a crack in their bridge. The Sharma visit loomed, Priya's probing glances and Rajinder's ultimatums tightening the pressure, and now his savings, his quiet rebellion, were on hold. Could their dream survive this?

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Oh, Sunny, a frozen account? That's awful! 😔 I had a setback too—my tutoring job cut hours, so my savings are slower. I handle it by writing, letting the frustration out. You're brave for facing the meeting. Let's pick that hotel tonight—it'll keep us going. What's one thing we can do to push past this?" Her empathy and resilience were a spark, her own setback mirroring his, their shared struggle strengthening their resolve.

Sunny typed, determination flickering: "Your writing's so strong, Anastasia. 😊 Let's push past by starting our film-poem outline tonight, no matter what. I'll call the bank tomorrow to fix my account. What's one idea for our story to keep us focused?" Sending it felt like a small victory, a refusal to let setbacks win. The Delhi afternoon buzzed outside, the Sharma visit a looming storm, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path through the chaos. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a lifeline, strong enough to weather this unexpected blow and the pressures closing in.

Chapter 61: Bridging the Gap

The Delhi evening was cloaked in a restless tension, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets quieted, the bustle of vendors giving way to the hum of evening prayers. It was 6:30 PM, October 13, 2025, and the Singh household was a pressure cooker, the Sharma visit now just hours away. Priya was in the living room, arranging a final array of sweets and flowers, her movements sharp with purpose, while Rajinder reviewed talking points for the engagement discussion, his voice low and resolute. Simran had stayed out, avoiding the storm. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan's creak a frantic rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 2:00 PM: "Sunny, a bank glitch and my job cutting hours? We're in this together. 😊 For our story, let's add a

scene where our characters write letters across borders, defying their families. I'm writing a poem to keep my spirits up. What's one thing you'll do to stay strong for the meeting?"

Her words, resilient and warm, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the despair of his frozen savings account and the looming Sharma visit. Priya's stern warning at lunch—"Sunny, beta, no phone tonight; this is about your future"—and Rajinder's unyielding, "Neha's family expects a clear commitment," had left him trembling, but Anastasia's suggestion for their film-poem story sparked a flicker of hope. The setback of his inaccessible savings, coupled with her reduced tutoring hours, made their dream of meeting feel fragile, but her defiance—writing poems despite her mother's pressure—urged him to bridge the gap between their worlds.

Sunny typed, fingers steadying with resolve: "Anastasia, your strength is unreal. 😄 Letters across borders? Perfect—our characters pouring their hearts out. I'll stay strong by sketching our story's scene tonight, even with the Sharmas coming. Bank's closed today, but I'll fix my account tomorrow. What's your poem about?" He hit send, his heart racing with a renewed sense of purpose. The 4,000 miles between Delhi and Saint Petersburg felt like a challenge they could face together, their shared story a bridge to close the gap, despite the pressures mounting—his parents' ultimatum, her mother's suspicions.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, her pen moving across a notebook as snow dusted the canals outside. Their bond, forged through shared setbacks and dreams, was a testament to their resilience. The Sharma visit loomed like a guillotine, but the thought of their story—characters defying borders with letters—gave him courage. His secret savings, though frozen, were a symbol of his rebellion, and Anastasia's poem was hers, both threads in a tapestry weaving their futures together.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sketching during the meeting? You're amazing, Sunny! 😊 My poem's about two hearts beating across oceans, refusing to break. I'm rooting for you tonight. Let's add a moment in our story where they promise to meet, no matter what. What's one thing you'll hold onto to get through the Sharma visit?" Her words were a spark, her poem a mirror of their love, her suggestion for their story a vow to keep fighting.

Sunny typed, heart swelling: "Your poem sounds like us, Anastasia. 😄 I'll hold onto our dream—our characters' letters, our meeting someday. During the visit, I'll say I need time for my career. What's one thing you'll hold onto against your mom's pressure?" Sending it felt like building their bridge stronger, each word a plank across the gap. The Delhi evening hummed outside, the Sharma visit a looming storm, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path through the chaos. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt unbreakable, a promise to bridge any distance or setback with love and defiance.

Chapter 62: Anastasia's Family Drama

The Delhi evening was cloaked in a tense hush, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets quieted, the hum of vendors replaced by the soft murmur of evening prayers. It was 7:30 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a pressure cooker, the Sharma visit now imminent—set for this evening, not tomorrow, a detail Sunny had miscalculated in his anxiety. Priya was in the living room, arranging a final spread of chai and

samosas, her movements brisk, while Rajinder rehearsed greetings, his voice tight with expectation. Simran had returned, sensing the storm, and lingered silently in the corner. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan's creak a frantic rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 3:00 PM: "Sunny, holding onto our dream keeps me strong too—those letters in our story are us! 😊 My mom just exploded—found my visa research on my laptop, called it 'foolish dreams.' Said I'm betraying her by chasing 'fantasies.' What will you hold onto during the Sharma visit tonight?"

Her words, raw with the sting of her mother's outburst, hit Sunny like a wave, mirroring the storm brewing in his own home. The Sharma visit, now hours away, was a guillotine—Priya's sharp warning at breakfast, "Sunny, beta, no phone tonight; this is your future," and Rajinder's stern, "Neha's family expects a commitment," had left him reeling. Anastasia's family drama, her mother's anger over the visa research, felt like a parallel to his own struggle, tightening their bond across the 4,000 miles. The setback of his frozen savings account and her reduced tutoring hours already loomed, but this new escalation—her mother's accusation of betrayal—added a fresh layer of urgency to their fight.

Sunny typed, fingers trembling with empathy and resolve: "Anastasia, your mom's reaction sounds so heavy—I'm here for you. 😔 I'll hold onto our story's promise scene tonight, picturing us meeting. The Sharmas are coming soon, and I'm terrified, but I'll say I need career time. What happened during your mom's outburst? How do you keep going?" He hit send, his heart racing as the reality of the Sharma visit pressed closer. The Delhi evening felt like a countdown, but Anastasia's struggle, so like his own, made their shared dream—a film-poem, a meeting—feel worth the fight.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, maybe staring at her laptop, snow falling outside as her mother's words echoed. Their bond, forged through setbacks and defiance, was now a lifeline against family dramas on both sides. The Sharma visit would demand his performance as the dutiful son, but his heart was with Anastasia, her visa research a bold rebellion mirroring his secret savings. Priya's probing glances and Rajinder's ultimatums replayed, but her message was a spark, urging him to stay strong.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, you're my anchor—thank you. 😊 Mom screamed about 'wasting my life,' threatened to cut my tutoring funds. I told her I'm choosing my path, but it hurt. Our story's promise scene keeps me going. During your visit, picture our characters' letters. What will you do if the Sharmas push hard?" Her resilience, despite the pain, was a beacon, her question sharpening his focus for the evening ahead.

Sunny typed, heart pounding: "You standing up to her? That's incredible, Anastasia. 😄 If the Sharmas push, I'll stick to needing time, maybe mention college plans. I'll picture our story to stay strong. What's one thing you'll do to keep your dream alive after this?" Sending it felt like a vow, their shared defiance a bridge across the chaos. The Delhi night buzzed, the Sharma visit a looming storm, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him through her family drama and his own. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt unbreakable, a promise to face any storm together.

Chapter 63: Sunny's Rebellion

The Delhi evening was a cauldron of tension, the October air thick with the scent of jasmine and chai as South Delhi's streets quieted, the hum of vendors giving way to the soft glow of streetlights. It was 8:00 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a stage set for the Sharma visit, now moments away. Priya adjusted a tray of samosas and laddoos in the living room, her movements precise but heavy with expectation, while Rajinder stood by the door, rehearsing greetings with a forced smile. Simran hovered nearby, her eyes darting to Sunny with quiet sympathy. Sunny sat on the edge of his bed, the fan's creak a frantic rhythm, his phone clutched tightly, glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 3:30 PM: "Sunny, sticking to your career plan sounds solid—you've got this! 😊 Standing up to my mom hurt, but I'm writing a new poem to keep my dream alive. I'm picturing our characters' promise scene too. What's one thing you'll do after the visit to keep our dream going?"

Her words, fierce with resilience, were a spark igniting Sunny's resolve. The Sharma visit—a formal engagement talk for Neha—was a guillotine, Priya's earlier warning, "Sunny, beta, no distractions tonight; this is serious," and Rajinder's stern, "Neha's family expects commitment," ringing in his ears. Anastasia's family drama, her mother's threats over the visa research, mirrored his own struggle, but her defiance fueled a rebellion in him. The frozen savings account, the looming ultimatum, the weight of his parents' expectations—it was all too much. Tonight, he decided, would be his turning point.

Sunny typed, fingers trembling with a mix of fear and determination: "Anastasia, your poem's going to be amazing—you're so strong. 😄 After the visit, I'll sketch our story's promise scene to keep us alive. I'm done hiding—I'm going to tell them tonight I'm not ready for Neha, maybe even hint at you. Wish me luck?" He hit send, his heart pounding like a drum. The rebellion was no longer just secret savings or stolen chats; it was a choice to stand for his dreams—filmmaking, Anastasia, a life of his own. The 4,000 miles between them felt like nothing compared to the chasm he was about to face with his parents.

The doorbell rang, sharp and jarring, signaling the Sharmas' arrival. Sunny's stomach knotted as he slipped his phone into his pocket and joined the living room, where Priya's smile was tight, Rajinder's handshake firm. Neha, dressed in a green saree, smiled politely, her parents beaming with expectation. The conversation began with pleasantries—weather, Diwali—but soon shifted to "future plans." Priya's eyes locked on Sunny, urging him to play the part. "Sunny's finishing his BBA," Rajinder said proudly, "ready for a stable bank job."

The room felt suffocating. Sunny's rebellion burned, fueled by Anastasia's courage. "Actually," he said, voice shaky but clear, "I'm not ready to settle yet. I want to focus on my career—maybe something creative, like filmmaking." The words hung in the air, a bombshell. Priya's smile faltered, Rajinder's eyes narrowed, and the Sharmas exchanged uneasy glances. "Filmmaking?" Neha's father asked, his tone skeptical. "That's not secure, Sunny."

"I need time to figure it out," Sunny pressed, heart racing. "I'm not ready for… other commitments either." The room went silent, Priya's gasp audible. Rajinder's voice was low, "We'll discuss this later, Sunny." The Sharmas left soon after, their disappointment palpable, the engagement talk derailed.

Back in his room, Sunny's phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, you TOLD them? You're incredible! 😊 I'm so proud. My poem's about our promise—us meeting someday. What happened? Tell me everything!" Her words were a balm, soothing the raw edge of his rebellion. The Delhi night hummed outside, his parents' anger a looming storm, but Sunny's heart was light. He'd taken a stand, and with Anastasia's support, their bond felt stronger than ever, a bridge ready to carry them through the fallout.

Chapter 64: Virtual Holidays

The Delhi night was cloaked in a charged stillness, the October air cool and carrying the faint scent of jasmine from a neighbor's garden, mingling with the distant hum of South Delhi's streets. It was 11:00 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was heavy with the aftermath of the Sharma visit. The engagement talk for Neha had unraveled after Sunny's bold rebellion—his declaration of wanting a creative career and delaying commitments had left Priya silent, Rajinder fuming, and the Sharmas departing with strained smiles. Simran had given him a quiet thumbs-up before retreating to her room. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:30 PM: "Sunny, you TOLD them? You're incredible! 😊 I'm so proud. My poem's about our promise—us meeting someday. What happened? Tell me everything!"

Her words, brimming with pride, were a lifeline, soothing the raw edge of his confrontation with his parents. The fallout was imminent—Priya's hurt silence and Rajinder's promise to "discuss this later" loomed like a storm—but Anastasia's support made Sunny feel he'd done the right thing. Her mention of their promise sparked an idea to keep their bond alive despite the chaos. With the holidays approaching, he wanted to share a virtual celebration, a way to bridge their worlds further.

Sunny typed, his heart still racing from the evening's upheaval: "Anastasia, your pride means everything. 😄 The Sharmas left upset, my parents are mad, but I feel free for once. I said I want a creative career, not Neha. Let's plan a virtual holiday—maybe Diwali for you, White Nights for me? Pick a day, and we'll celebrate together online. What happened with your poem?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, her notebook open, snow dusting her window as she wrote their promise. The 4,000 miles between them felt conquerable with this idea, a way to defy the pressures—his parents' anger, her mother's suspicions—through shared joy.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The Sharma visit had been a turning point, his rebellion a crack in the wall of expectations. His secret savings, still frozen, and their visa plans were on hold, but a virtual holiday felt like a tangible step, a celebration of their bond. Priya's disappointed eyes and Rajinder's stern warnings replayed, but Anastasia's message was a beacon, lighting a path forward.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, you're so brave—I'm in awe! 😊 My poem's about two hearts promising to meet, no matter the borders. A virtual holiday? Love it! Let's do Diwali next week—teach me your traditions! I'll share White Nights vibes too. My mom's still upset about my visa research, but I'm holding on. What's one Diwali thing you'd teach

me first?" Her enthusiasm was a spark, her poem a mirror of their shared dream, her willingness to celebrate Diwali a bridge across their worlds.

Sunny typed, heart swelling: "Your poem sounds like us, Anastasia! 😄 For Diwali, I'd teach you to light an oil lamp—diyas, they're small, glowing, like hope. We'll do it on a call, maybe with your jazz for White Nights. What's one White Nights thing you'd share first?" Sending it felt like a vow, their virtual holiday a defiance of the fallout from his rebellion. The Delhi night hummed outside, his parents' anger a looming shadow, but Anastasia's words were a light, weaving their bond tighter. As he awaited her reply, their shared holiday felt like a promise, strong enough to weather any storm or distance.

Chapter 65: The Power of Patience

The Delhi night was cloaked in a restless calm, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets settled into a quiet hum, the distant clatter of late-night vendors fading. It was 11:45 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was heavy with the fallout of the Sharma visit earlier that evening. Priya's silence had been deafening, her eyes glistening with disappointment, while Rajinder's terse "we'll talk tomorrow" had left Sunny on edge. Simran, sensing the storm, had slipped him a quiet nod of support before retreating to her room. Sunny sat on his bed, the fan's creak a nervous rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 7:15 PM: "Lighting diyas for Diwali? That sounds so beautiful, Sunny! 😊 I'd share a White Nights tradition—strolling by the Neva at twilight, music everywhere. Let's do our virtual holiday next week! My mom's still mad about my 'foolish dreams,' but I'm staying strong. How are you holding up after the Sharma visit?"

Her words, warm and resilient, were a lifeline, soothing the raw sting of his rebellion against his parents' expectations. The Sharma visit—where he'd declared his desire for a creative career and rejected Neha's engagement—had been a seismic shift, but the aftermath left him trembling. Priya's hurt and Rajinder's anger were a storm brewing, and his frozen savings account added to the uncertainty. Yet Anastasia's suggestion of a virtual holiday, and her patience in the face of her mother's anger, sparked a realization: patience could be their strength, a way to endure the pressures while building their future.

Sunny typed, fingers steadying with a newfound calm: "Anastasia, your strength is unreal—holding on despite your mom's anger. 😄 Strolling by the Neva sounds magical—I can't wait for our virtual holiday. I'm shaken after the Sharmas—my parents are furious, but I feel free. Let's be patient, keep planning our film-poem and visas. What's one thing you're doing to stay patient with your mom's pressure?" He hit send, his heart settling as he embraced the power of patience. The 4,000 miles between Delhi and Saint Petersburg felt like a test they could pass together, their bond a bridge fortified by steady steps.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, picturing Anastasia in her Saint Petersburg apartment, perhaps writing by her window, snow dusting the canals. Their shared dream—visas, a film-poem project, meeting someday—was a flame kept alive by patience, not desperation. The fallout from the Sharma visit loomed—Rajinder's promised "talk" tomorrow, Priya's wounded silence—but Anastasia's resilience reminded him to breathe, to wait, to build. His secret savings, though frozen, and their visa plans were seeds that needed time to grow.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, you're so brave for standing up—I'm proud of you! 😊 I stay patient by writing daily, letting my poems hold my dreams until the time's right. Our virtual Diwali will be amazing—diyas and jazz! What's one thing you'll do to stay patient with your parents' anger?" Her words were a spark, her patience a mirror of his own resolve, her excitement for their holiday a reminder of their shared joy.

Sunny typed, heart steady: "Your poems are your patience—that's beautiful, Anastasia. 😄 I'll stay patient by sketching our story's scenes, keeping our dream alive quietly. I'll face my parents' talk tomorrow with calm, not anger. What's one Diwali tradition you're excited to try virtually?" Sending it felt like embracing patience as a weapon, their bond a steady force against the storms—his parents' fury, her mother's pressure. The Delhi night hummed outside, the fallout looming, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path where patience could pave the way to their future. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a quiet power, strong enough to endure any wait or challenge.

Chapter 66: Cultural Compromises

The Delhi morning was crisp, the October sun casting a gentle glow over South Delhi's bustling streets, where vendors called out and the faint scent of roasting corn mingled with temple incense. It was 10:30 AM, October 13, 2025, and the Singh household was a storm of unresolved tension after last night's Sharma visit. Priya was in the kitchen, her movements sharp as she prepared breakfast, while Rajinder sat at the dining table, his face set in a grim line, ready for the "talk" he'd promised Sunny. Simran lingered nearby, offering a quiet glance of support. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a restless rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:00 AM: "Sunny, sketching to stay patient? That's so you! 😊 I'm excited to try lighting a virtual diya—it feels like touching your world. My mom's still upset, but I'm keeping calm. What Diwali tradition are you most excited to share with me virtually?"

Her words, warm and steady, were a lifeline, easing the dread of the confrontation looming with his parents. Last night's rebellion—rejecting Neha's engagement and declaring his filmmaking dreams—had left Priya wounded and Rajinder furious, their silence a heavier ultimatum than words. Anastasia's patience, her willingness to embrace his culture through a virtual Diwali, sparked an idea: cultural compromises could be a way to bridge their worlds and navigate the pressures. But first, he had to face his parents.

Sunny typed, fingers steady with a mix of resolve and nerves: "Anastasia, your calm is my strength. 😄 I'm excited to show you rangoli—colorful patterns we make for Diwali, like art for luck. I'm about to face my parents' talk—hoping to compromise, maybe say I'll consider their plans but need time for my dreams. How do you compromise with your mom's pressure?" He hit send, his heart racing as he imagined her in Saint Petersburg, perhaps sipping tea as dawn broke, ready to light a virtual diya. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a gap they could bridge with shared traditions, even as his parents' anger loomed.

Before he could brace himself, Rajinder's voice boomed from the living room: "Sunny, come here. Now." Heart pounding, Sunny stepped into the fray. Priya sat beside Rajinder, her eyes red-rimmed but firm. "You embarrassed us last night," Rajinder began, his voice low and

cutting. “Neha’s family expected commitment. What’s going on with you? Who’s behind this ‘filmmaking’ nonsense?”

Sunny swallowed, Anastasia’s courage echoing in his mind. “I’m not ready for marriage,” he said, voice steady. “I want to explore filmmaking, something I love. I’ll consider your plans, but I need time to find my path.” Priya’s face softened slightly, but Rajinder’s jaw tightened. “This is about family honor,” he said. “We’ll give you time, but no distractions—no phone secrets.” It was a compromise, grudging but real, a crack in the wall of expectations.

Back in his room, Sunny’s phone buzzed. Anastasia’s reply: “Rangoli sounds beautiful, Sunny—I can’t wait to try it virtually! 😊 You’re facing your parents? So brave! I compromise with my mom by agreeing to meet her ‘match’ but saying I’m focused on studies. It buys time. How’d the talk go?” Her words were a spark, her own compromise mirroring his, their shared defiance a bridge across their cultural divides.

Sunny typed, heart lighter: “The talk was rough, but they gave me time—a compromise. 😄 I’ll show you rangoli designs on our call. What’s one White Nights tradition you’d compromise on to share with me?” Sending it felt like strengthening their bridge, their cultural compromises a way to honor their worlds while fighting for their dreams. The Delhi morning buzzed outside, his parents’ tension lingering, but Anastasia’s words were a beacon, guiding him through the storm. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to navigate any compromise or challenge.

Chapter 67: A Surprise Visit Plan

The Delhi afternoon was alive with the vibrant pulse of South Delhi’s streets, the October sun casting a warm glow over vendors hawking fruits and the faint chime of temple bells. It was 3:06 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was still simmering with the morning’s tense compromise. Priya was in the kitchen, her movements quieter but still sharp, while Rajinder had retreated to his study, his grudging agreement to give Sunny “time” hanging heavy. Simran, sensing the shift, had slipped out to meet friends. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan’s creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 10:36 AM: “Sunny, you got them to compromise? That’s huge! 😊 Rangoli sounds like art I’d love—let’s draw it virtually! I’d compromise on White Nights by skipping the big crowds for a quiet Neva walk with you. My mom’s easing up a bit after I agreed to meet her ‘match.’ What’s one thing you want for our virtual Diwali?”

Her words, brimming with excitement, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the lingering tension of his parents’ confrontation. Their grudging compromise—time to explore his filmmaking dreams, but no “phone secrets”—felt like a fragile victory, but Anastasia’s enthusiasm for their virtual Diwali sparked a bold idea. Her mention of compromising with her mother, meeting the “match” to buy time, mirrored his own strategy, and it ignited a daring thought: what if they planned a surprise visit to make their dreams real? The frozen savings account and visa hurdles loomed, but her resilience pushed him to dream bigger.

Sunny typed, heart racing with a mix of nerves and excitement: “Anastasia, your Neva walk sounds perfect—I’d love that quiet moment. 😄 For our virtual Diwali, I want us to light diyas

on a call and share a story. But… what if we planned a surprise visit? Me to Saint Petersburg, or you to Delhi? I'll fix my bank account tomorrow. Crazy idea?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe by her window, snow falling as her eyes widened at the idea. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a challenge they could conquer, their bond a bridge strong enough to carry a bold plan.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his racing thoughts. The Sharma visit's fallout—Priya's hurt, Rajinder's conditional leniency—still stung, but Anastasia's shared defiance made him believe they could take a leap. His secret savings, once unfrozen, could fund a visa or a ticket, and the thought of seeing her, of turning their virtual holiday into reality, was exhilarating. Priya's earlier warning—"No distractions, Sunny"—echoed, but this plan felt like a rebellion worth risking.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "A surprise visit? Sunny, that's wild—I'm in! 😊 I'd love you in Saint Petersburg, showing you my canals, or me in Delhi, tasting your golgappas. My tutoring funds are low, but I'll save harder. Let's plan it—where first, and when? Also, how's your parents' mood now?" Her enthusiasm was a spark, her willingness to leap with him tightening their bond against the pressures—her mother's grudging compromise, his parents' fragile truce.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "You in Delhi or me in Saint Petersburg? Let's say you come here first—Holi, March 2026? 😄 I'll call the bank tomorrow to unfreeze my account. Parents are still tense, but they're giving me time. What's one thing we need to plan this visit?" Sending it felt like planting a flag, their surprise visit a bold step toward their future. The Delhi afternoon buzzed outside, his parents' tension a lingering storm, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path through the chaos. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to turn dreams into reality, no matter the distance or obstacles.

Chapter 68: Travel Anxieties

The Delhi evening was cloaked in a restless hum, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets settled into a quieter rhythm, the clatter of vendors giving way to the soft glow of streetlights. It was 7:30 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was still tense from the morning's confrontation and the fallout of the Sharma visit. Priya was in the kitchen, cleaning up with deliberate slowness, her silence heavy with disappointment, while Rajinder sat in the living room, flipping through a newspaper, his jaw tight. Simran had returned, offering Sunny a quiet nod before retreating to her room. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a nervous pulse, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 3:00 PM: "Holi 2026? Sunny, I'm dreaming of colors and you! 😊 One thing to plan? Saving enough for the flight—my tutoring's slow, but I'll push. My mom's calmer, but I'm nervous about actually leaving. What's your biggest travel anxiety right now?"

Her words, vibrant yet tinged with nerves, mirrored the storm of excitement and fear swirling in Sunny's chest. The idea of Anastasia visiting Delhi for Holi—a bold plan born from their shared rebellion—felt like a beacon, but the practicalities were daunting. His secret savings account, still frozen, was a hurdle, and the morning's compromise with his parents—time to explore filmmaking but no "distractions"—felt fragile. Priya's sharp glance at his phone during lunch and Rajinder's warning, "No secrets, Sunny, or we'll rethink this leniency,"

loomed large. Anastasia's question about travel anxieties forced him to face his own fears head-on.

Sunny typed, fingers trembling with a mix of thrill and dread: "Anastasia, Holi with you would be unreal! 😄 My biggest travel anxiety? Telling my parents about you coming—they'd lose it over a 'foreign girl.' I'll fix my bank account tomorrow, start saving more. What's making you nervous about leaving?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe by her snowy canal, her blue eyes wide with the same mix of hope and fear. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a challenge they could conquer, but the weight of his parents' expectations and the logistics—visas, flights, funds—stirred a knot of anxiety.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his racing thoughts. Their bond, strengthened by shared dreams and defiance, was now pushing them toward a real plan—Anastasia in Delhi, colors flying under a March sky. But the frozen account, his parents' fragile truce, and the cultural gap between their worlds loomed. Could he really bring her here without shattering his family's trust?

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, your parents sound intense—mine would freak too. 😔 My biggest anxiety? The visa process—it's so complicated, and I'm scared I'll mess it up. But I want to see your Delhi. Let's start a savings plan together tonight. What's one thing you're most excited about if I visit?" Her vulnerability and determination were a spark, her own fears mirroring his, their shared goal tightening their bond.

Sunny typed, heart racing: "The visa process scares me too, but we'll figure it out together. 😊 I'm most excited to see you try golgappas and laugh at the spice! Let's make a savings spreadsheet tonight. What's one thing you're excited about in Delhi?" Sending it felt like a step toward conquering their anxieties, their bond a bridge strong enough to span the distance and challenges. The Delhi evening hummed outside, his parents' tension a lingering storm, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path through the travel fears. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a quiet strength, ready to face any obstacle for the promise of Holi 2026.

Chapter 69: The Approval Letter

The Delhi night was cloaked in a restless quiet, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets settled into a soft hum, the distant clatter of late-night vendors fading into the night. It was 10:00 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was still, the tension from the morning's confrontation and the Sharma visit's fallout lingering like a heavy fog. Priya and Rajinder had retired early, their silence a mix of disappointment and begrudging compromise after Sunny's refusal to commit to Neha. Simran had slipped him a supportive glance before heading to bed. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 5:30 PM: "Sunny, golgappas and laughing? I can't wait! 😊 A savings spreadsheet sounds perfect—let's do it tonight. I'm most excited to see your Old Delhi markets, feel the chaos. My mom just handed me a letter to meet her 'match'—I said no again, but it's exhausting. Any news on your bank account?"

Her words, vibrant yet strained, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the weight of his parents' fragile truce and the anxiety of their travel plans. The idea of Anastasia in Delhi for Holi 2026, tasting golgappas and wandering Chandni Chowk, was a dream that kept him grounded. But her mention of her mother's persistence sparked a new urgency. This morning, while checking his email, Sunny had received an unexpected notification: his bank account was unfrozen after a quick call to the bank, and, more shockingly, an approval letter for a small freelance filmmaking grant he'd applied for months ago had arrived—a modest sum, but enough to bolster his secret savings for their visa or travel plans. It felt like a sign, a spark of hope amidst the storm.

Sunny typed, heart racing with excitement and nerves: "Anastasia, Old Delhi with you would be unreal! 😄 Big news—my bank account's unfrozen, and I got an approval letter for a filmmaking grant! Small, but it's a start for our savings. I'm sorry your mom's pushing that guy—you're so strong for saying no. Let's start that spreadsheet tonight. What's one thing you'd do with my grant money for our dream?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe by her snowy window, her eyes lighting up at his news. The 4,000 miles between them felt surmountable with this breakthrough, despite the pressures—his parents' expectations, her mother's insistence.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant, though small, was a validation of his filmmaking dreams, a tangible step toward their shared future. Priya's sharp warning—"No secrets, Sunny"—and Rajinder's conditional leniency loomed, but the approval letter felt like a quiet rebellion, a sign he could defy their scripted path. Anastasia's strength, rejecting her mother's "match," mirrored his own, tightening their bond.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "A filmmaking grant? Sunny, that's amazing! 😊 I'm so proud! I'd use it to fund your trip here—see my canals, start our film-poem. My mom's letter hurt, but I'm holding on for us. Let's add a savings goal to the spreadsheet. What's one thing you'd do with the grant for us?" Her enthusiasm was a spark, her resilience against her mother's pressure a mirror of his fight, their shared dream glowing brighter.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "You in my film-poem? Perfect, Anastasia! 😄 I'd use the grant for visa fees first, get us closer to Holi 2026. Let's set a savings goal tonight—maybe 50,000 rupees for me, your tutoring funds for you? How's your mom reacting now?" Sending it felt like locking in their future, the approval letter a bridge across their challenges. The Delhi night hummed outside, his parents' tension a lingering storm, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path through the chaos. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to turn the grant into a reality that could defy any distance or pressure.

Chapter 70: Countdown to Reunion

The Delhi morning was vibrant with the hum of South Delhi's streets, the October sun casting a golden glow over bustling vendors and the faint chime of temple bells. It was 11:00 AM, October 13, 2025, and the Singh household was still simmering with the tension from yesterday's confrontation and the Sharma visit's fallout. Priya was in the kitchen, her movements quieter but still deliberate, preparing lunch, while Rajinder sat at the dining table,

his silence heavy with unresolved frustration over Sunny's rebellion. Simran, sensing the storm, had slipped out for a college project. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:30 AM: "Sunny, visa fees with your grant? That's so exciting! 😊 My mom's still upset, but I told her I'm focusing on my studies, not her 'match.' Let's set that savings goal tonight—50,000 rupees sounds good, I'll aim for 20,000 rubles. What's one moment you're dreaming of for our Holi 2026 reunion?"

Her words, brimming with hope, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the weight of his parents' disappointment. The approval letter for his filmmaking grant and the unfreezing of his savings account felt like a small victory, a spark of rebellion against Priya's sharp warnings—"No distractions, Sunny"—and Rajinder's stern insistence on Neha and a "stable future." Anastasia's commitment to their savings goal and her defiance of her mother's pressure fueled his resolve, making their dream of a Holi 2026 reunion feel tangible. The countdown had begun, but the pressures—family expectations, visa hurdles, and cultural gaps—loomed large.

Sunny typed, heart racing with anticipation: "Anastasia, you dodging your mom's match is so brave! 😄 I'm dreaming of us at Holi 2026, you covered in colors, laughing on a Delhi rooftop as we share a story. Let's make that spreadsheet tonight—50,000 rupees, 20,000 rubles. My parents are still mad, but I'm holding on. What's one moment you're dreaming of for our reunion?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe sipping tea as dawn broke over snowy canals, her notebook open with dreams of Delhi. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a countdown they could conquer together, their bond a bridge against the storm.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant money, though modest, was a lifeline for visa fees or travel, and their shared savings goal was a concrete step toward Holi 2026. Priya's hurt silence and Rajinder's grudging compromise—"time" for his dreams but no "secrets"—hung heavy, but Anastasia's vision of their reunion was a spark of joy. The idea of her in Delhi, colors flying, made his heart ache with hope, even as the fear of his parents' reaction to her lingered.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "A Delhi rooftop with colors? Sunny, I'm counting down already! 😊 I'm dreaming of us walking Chandni Chowk, you teaching me Hindi phrases as we eat street food. My mom's calmer but suspicious. Let's add visa timelines to our spreadsheet. What's one thing you'll do today to keep our reunion dream alive?" Her words were a beacon, her vision of their reunion tightening their bond, her practical suggestion grounding their dream in reality.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Chandni Chowk with you? Perfect, Anastasia! 😄 Today, I'll research visa timelines and sketch our Holi reunion scene to stay focused. What's one thing you'll do today for our dream?" Sending it felt like ticking off the first day of their countdown, their shared goal a defiance of the pressures—his parents' anger, her mother's suspicions. The Delhi morning buzzed outside, the tension lingering, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him toward Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to carry them through the wait and any challenge.

Chapter 71: Airport Anticipation

The Delhi morning was alive with the vibrant hum of South Delhi's streets, the October sun casting a golden glow over bustling vendors and the faint chime of temple bells. It was 9:30 AM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was still heavy with the fallout of the Sharma visit two days prior. Priya was in the kitchen, her movements slow and deliberate as she prepared breakfast, while Rajinder sat in the living room, his silence a mix of frustration and grudging acceptance of Sunny's compromise for time. Simran had left early for a college event, leaving a quiet note of support for Sunny. He sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 5:00 AM: "Sunny, sketching our Holi reunion? I can't wait to see it! 😊 Today, I'll write a poem about our Chandni Chowk moment to keep our dream alive. My mom's still watching me closely, but I'm focused on Holi 2026. What's one thing you imagine when you think of me at Delhi's airport?"

Her words, brimming with warmth and anticipation, ignited a spark in Sunny, pulling him from the lingering tension of his parents' disappointment. The image of Anastasia at Delhi's airport, stepping into his world for their Holi 2026 reunion, was a vivid dream that made the pressures—Priya's hurt silence, Rajinder's stern warnings about Neha, and the frozen savings account now resolved—feel surmountable. Their shared savings goal and visa plans were taking shape, and her question about the airport stirred a rush of excitement, tempered by the anxiety of making their reunion real.

Sunny typed, heart racing with a mix of thrill and nerves: "Anastasia, your poem's going to be amazing! 😄 At Delhi's airport, I imagine you stepping out, blonde hair catching the light, looking for me in the chaos. I'd hold a sign with your name, grinning like an idiot. My parents are still tense, but I'm researching visa timelines today. What do you imagine when you think of me at Saint Petersburg's airport?" He hit send, picturing her at Indira Gandhi International, her blue eyes wide as she navigated the bustling terminal. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a countdown to Holi 2026, their bond a bridge against the pressures of family expectations and logistical hurdles.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The filmmaking grant and unfrozen savings were small victories, but the thought of Anastasia in Delhi—her laughter mingling with the city's chaos—was a beacon. Priya's sharp glance at his phone yesterday and Rajinder's warning, "No distractions, Sunny," lingered, but her question about the airport made their reunion feel closer, a tangible goal worth fighting for.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "A sign with my name? Sunny, I'd run to you! 😊 In Saint Petersburg's airport, I see you stepping out, confused by the snow, me waving wildly with a scarf for you. My mom's still suspicious, but I'm saving harder. What's one thing we need to prepare for my airport arrival?" Her words were a spark, her vision of him in her snowy city tightening their bond, her practical question grounding their dream in reality.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "You waving in the snow? I'd love that, Anastasia! 😄 For your Delhi arrival, we need to plan a pickup—maybe a taxi to Hauz Khas to avoid my parents. I'll sketch our airport scene today. What's one thing you'd prepare for my arrival?" Sending it felt like ticking off another step in their countdown, their airport anticipation a defiance of the pressures—his parents' tension, her mother's scrutiny. The Delhi morning buzzed outside,

the weight of family expectations lingering, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to carry them through the anticipation and any challenge.

Chapter 72: First Embrace

The Delhi morning was vibrant with the hum of South Delhi's streets, the October sun casting a warm glow over bustling vendors and the faint chime of temple bells. It was 10:00 AM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was quieter but still heavy with the aftermath of the Sharma visit two days ago. Priya was in the kitchen, her movements slow as she prepared chai, while Rajinder read the newspaper, his silence a mix of grudging acceptance and lingering frustration over Sunny's refusal to commit to Neha. Simran, back from her college event, gave Sunny a quick supportive smile before heading to her room. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 5:30 AM: "Sunny, a taxi to Hauz Khas? Perfect plan to keep things secret! 😊 For your arrival in Saint Petersburg, I'd prepare a warm coat for you—snow's no joke! I'm saving more each day for Holi 2026. What's one thing you imagine about our first hug when we meet?"

Her words, warm and vivid, sent a rush of anticipation through Sunny, easing the weight of his parents' tension. The image of their first embrace—at Delhi's airport or by her snowy canals—felt like a beacon, making the pressures of Priya's disappointed glances and Rajinder's warnings—"No distractions, Sunny"—fade into the background. Their shared savings goal, the filmmaking grant, and their visa plans were steps toward Holi 2026, but Anastasia's question about their first hug brought the dream into sharp, emotional focus. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a countdown they were racing to meet.

Sunny typed, heart racing with a mix of excitement and longing: "Anastasia, a warm coat for me? You're too sweet! 😄 I imagine our first hug at Delhi's airport—me spotting you in the crowd, running to you, a big, tight hug like we've known each other forever. My parents are still quiet, but I'm sketching our airport scene today. What's your vision of our first hug?" He hit send, picturing her stepping into Delhi's chaotic terminal, her blonde hair catching the light, his arms wrapping around her in a moment that would make every struggle worth it. The thought of that embrace fueled his resolve, despite the family pressures and logistical hurdles.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant money and unfrozen savings were lifelines, but the real strength came from their shared dream—Anastasia in Delhi, colors flying at Holi, or him in Saint Petersburg, bundled against the snow. Priya's sharp warning at breakfast—"Sunny, beta, focus on your future"—and Rajinder's stern gaze lingered, but Anastasia's question about their hug was a spark, igniting his courage to keep pushing forward.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "A big, tight hug in Delhi? Sunny, my heart's racing! 😊 I see our first hug by the Neva River—you running to me, me laughing as I pull you close, snow falling around us. My mom's still watching my phone, but I'm saving harder. What's one thing we need to make our first hug real?" Her words were a vivid promise, her vision of their embrace tightening their bond, her question grounding their dream in practical steps.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: “Your hug by the Neva? I can feel it already, Anastasia! 😄 To make it real, we need to finalize our savings spreadsheet and start visa applications soon. I’ll research Delhi airport logistics today. What’s one thing you’ll do for our hug?” Sending it felt like locking in their countdown to Holi 2026, their first embrace a goal worth every sacrifice. The Delhi morning buzzed outside, his parents’ tension a lingering storm, but Anastasia’s words were a beacon, lighting a path to their reunion. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to carry them through any distance or challenge to that first, unforgettable hug.

Chapter 73: Exploring Delhi Together

The Delhi afternoon was alive with the vibrant pulse of South Delhi’s streets, the October sun casting a golden glow over bustling vendors, honking rickshaws, and the faint scent of street-side chai. It was 3:30 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was quieter but still heavy with the lingering tension from the Sharma visit’s fallout. Priya was in the living room, arranging cushions with a distracted air, while Rajinder was out meeting a colleague, his earlier silence a grudging acceptance of Sunny’s compromise for time. Simran, sensing the calm before another storm, was in her room, texting. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan’s creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 11:00 AM: “Sunny, our hug by the Neva? I’m counting down! 😊 Finalizing our savings spreadsheet and starting visa apps sounds perfect. I’ll research Saint Petersburg airport logistics today. For our hug, I’ll save every ruble I can. What’s one place in Delhi you’d take me first when I arrive?”

Her words, brimming with anticipation, sparked a rush of excitement in Sunny, easing the weight of his parents’ disapproval. The image of Anastasia in Delhi for their Holi 2026 reunion—her laughter mingling with the city’s chaos—was a vivid dream that made Priya’s sharp glances and Rajinder’s stern warnings—“No secrets, Sunny”—feel surmountable. Their filmmaking grant, unfrozen savings, and visa plans were steps toward that hug, but her question about exploring Delhi together brought their reunion into sharp, joyful focus. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a countdown they were racing to meet.

Sunny typed, heart racing with a mix of thrill and longing: “Anastasia, saving every ruble? You’re amazing! 😄 First place I’d take you in Delhi? Chandni Chowk—narrow lanes, spicy golgappas, colorful chaos. You’d love it! I’m researching airport logistics today too. Parents are still tense, but I’m sketching our Holi scene to stay focused. Where’s the first place you’d take me in Saint Petersburg?” He hit send, picturing her weaving through Chandni Chowk’s crowded bazaars, her blue eyes wide as she tasted street food, his hand guiding her through the chaos. The thought of exploring Delhi together fueled his resolve, despite the family pressures and logistical hurdles.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan’s hum blending with his thoughts. The grant money and savings were lifelines, but the real strength came from their shared vision—Anastasia in Delhi, colors flying at Holi, or him in Saint Petersburg, navigating her snowy streets. Priya’s quiet disappointment at breakfast—“Sunny, beta, think about your future”—and Rajinder’s conditional leniency lingered, but Anastasia’s question about Delhi was a spark, igniting his courage to dream bigger.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Chandni Chowk? I'm already craving golgappas, Sunny! 😊 I'd take you to Peterhof Palace first—fountains, gardens, like a fairy tale in snow. My mom's still suspicious, but I'm pushing forward. What's one thing we'd do in Chandni Chowk to make it unforgettable?" Her words were a vivid promise, her vision of Peterhof tightening their bond, her question deepening their dream of exploring together.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Peterhof sounds magical, Anastasia! 😄 In Chandni Chowk, we'd share a plate of jalebis, sticky and sweet, and tell each other a secret under the market lights. I'll add airport pickup plans to our spreadsheet tonight. What's one thing we'd do in Peterhof to make it ours?" Sending it felt like mapping their reunion, their shared explorations a defiance of the pressures—his parents' tension, her mother's scrutiny. The Delhi afternoon buzzed outside, the weight of family expectations lingering, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to carry them through any distance or challenge to that unforgettable first adventure together.

Chapter 74: Russian Eyes on India

The Delhi evening was cloaked in a gentle October warmth, the vibrant hum of South Delhi's streets softening as vendors packed up and the faint scent of jasmine mingled with the glow of streetlights. It was 7:00 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was quieter but still heavy with the lingering tension from the Sharma visit's fallout. Priya was in the kitchen, washing dishes with a distracted air, while Rajinder watched a cricket match, his silence a grudging truce after Sunny's refusal to commit to Neha. Simran, back from her room, shot Sunny a supportive glance before scrolling through her phone. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 2:30 PM: "Jalebis and secrets in Chandni Chowk? Sunny, I'm already there in my mind! 😊 In Peterhof, we'd dance by the fountains, snow falling, sharing a dream under the stars. My mom's still watching my every move, but I'm researching Delhi culture now. What's one thing you think I'd love most about India?"

Her words, vibrant and curious, sparked a rush of warmth in Sunny, easing the weight of his parents' disapproval. The image of Anastasia in Delhi for their Holi 2026 reunion—her blue eyes wide in Chandni Chowk, her laughter mingling with the city's chaos—was a beacon that made Priya's disappointed glances and Rajinder's stern warnings—"No distractions, Sunny"—feel surmountable. Her curiosity about India, her Russian eyes eager to see his world, deepened their bond, making their shared savings, filmmaking grant, and visa plans feel like steps toward a tangible future. The 4,000 miles between them were a countdown they were racing to meet.

Sunny typed, heart racing with excitement: "Anastasia, dancing at Peterhof sounds like a dream! 😄 You'd love India's street food most—golgappas, chaat, jalebis, all bursting with flavor. I'm adding our airport pickup to the spreadsheet tonight. My parents are still quiet, but I'm sketching our Chandni Chowk scene to stay strong. What's one thing you've learned about Delhi that excites you?" He hit send, picturing her navigating his city's chaotic markets, her blonde hair dusted with Holi colors, her smile bright as she tasted spicy chaat. The

thought of her discovering India through his eyes fueled his resolve, despite the family pressures and logistical hurdles.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant money and unfrozen savings were lifelines, but Anastasia's curiosity about his culture was the real spark, weaving their worlds closer. Priya's quiet disappointment at dinner—"Sunny, beta, think of your family"—and Rajinder's conditional leniency lingered, but her question about India was a reminder of their shared dream, a future where she could see his world firsthand.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Street food? I'm so ready for that, Sunny! 😊 I read about Delhi's Red Fort—it sounds majestic, like a story in stone. My mom's still suspicious, but I'm saving every ruble for our reunion. What's one Indian tradition you'd teach me first in Delhi?" Her words were a vivid promise, her excitement about the Red Fort tightening their bond, her question deepening their dream of exploring together.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "The Red Fort? You'll love its history, Anastasia! 😄 First tradition? I'd teach you to make a rangoli—colorful patterns for luck, perfect for Holi. I'll research visa fees tonight to keep us on track. What's one Russian tradition you'd teach me first?" Sending it felt like building their bridge stronger, her Russian eyes on India a defiance of the pressures—his parents' tension, her mother's scrutiny. The Delhi evening hummed outside, the weight of family expectations lingering, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to carry them through any distance or challenge to that vibrant reunion.

Chapter 75: Family Meetings

The Delhi morning was alive with the vibrant pulse of South Delhi's streets, the October sun casting a warm glow over bustling vendors and the faint chime of temple bells. It was 11:00 AM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a tense stage, the fallout from the Sharma visit two days ago still simmering. Priya was in the kitchen, her movements brisk as she prepared an early lunch for an unexpected family meeting Rajinder had called, his face set with determination. Simran lingered in the living room, her eyes flicking to Sunny with quiet support. Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a nervous rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:30 AM: "Sunny, rangoli for Holi? I'm so excited to learn that! 😊 I'd teach you a Russian tradition—making blini, thin pancakes, for Maslenitsa, our spring festival. My mom's called a family meeting today—probably about my 'distractions.' I'm nervous. What's one thing you'd show me in Delhi to calm my nerves?"

Her words, warm yet tinged with anxiety, mirrored the storm brewing in Sunny's chest. The image of Anastasia learning rangoli, her hands dusted with colored powder, was a beacon, but the news of her mother's family meeting echoed the tension in his own home. Rajinder's call for a meeting, announced at breakfast with a stern, "Sunny, we need to settle this—no more excuses," and Priya's quiet, "It's for your future, beta," had left him on edge. Their grudging compromise—time for his filmmaking dreams but no "distractions"—felt fragile, and this meeting threatened to unravel it. Anastasia's question about calming her nerves in Delhi sparked a resolve to face his own fears.

Sunny typed, heart racing with a mix of support and dread: “Anastasia, blini for Maslenitsa sounds delicious! 😄 To calm your nerves, I’d take you to Lodhi Garden—green, quiet, a break from Delhi’s chaos. My parents called a family meeting too—probably about Neha again. I’m scared but holding onto our Holi 2026 dream. What will you say if your mom pushes her ‘match’?” He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe sipping tea as dawn broke, bracing for her own confrontation. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a shared countdown, their bond a bridge against the pressures of family meetings.

As he waited, the doorbell rang, signaling relatives—uncles and aunts invited for Rajinder’s meeting. Sunny’s stomach knotted as he joined the living room, where Priya arranged chai and biscuits, her eyes avoiding his. Rajinder began, voice firm: “Sunny’s future needs clarity. Neha’s family is willing to reconsider, but we need commitment.” An uncle chimed in, “Filmmaking is risky, Sunny. A bank job and marriage are secure.” Sunny’s heart pounded, Anastasia’s courage echoing. “I need time,” he said, voice steady. “I’m exploring filmmaking, and I’m not ready for marriage.” The room tensed, Priya’s gasp audible, but Simran’s subtle nod gave him strength. Rajinder frowned but said, “We’ll discuss again. No secrets, Sunny.”

Back in his room, his phone buzzed. Anastasia’s reply: “Lodhi Garden sounds like peace, Sunny! 😊 My mom’s meeting was rough—she pushed the match, I said I’m focused on studies. She’s not happy, but I bought time. You faced your meeting too? So brave! What happened?” Her resilience was a spark, her own defiance mirroring his, their shared dream tightening their bond.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: “You standing up to your mom? Amazing, Anastasia! 😄 My meeting was tense—pushed Neha, but I held my ground for filmmaking, got time. I’ll sketch our Lodhi Garden scene to stay strong. What’s one thing you’ll do after your meeting to keep our dream alive?” Sending it felt like reinforcing their bridge, their family meetings a shared trial. The Delhi morning buzzed outside, his parents’ tension lingering, but Anastasia’s words were a beacon, lighting a path to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to weather any confrontation or distance.

Chapter 76: Clashes and Compromises

The Delhi afternoon was thick with the vibrant hum of South Delhi’s streets, the October sun casting a warm glow over bustling vendors and the faint scent of roasted peanuts mingling with temple incense. It was 3:33 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was still reeling from the tense family meeting earlier that morning. Priya was in the kitchen, her movements slow and heavy with unspoken disappointment, while Rajinder sat in the living room, his silence a mix of frustration and reluctant compromise after Sunny’s firm stance on pursuing filmmaking and delaying marriage. Simran had slipped out again, leaving a quiet text: “Proud of you, bhai.” Sunny sat at his desk, the fan’s creak a restless rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 11:03 AM: “Sunny, you held your ground? You’re incredible! 😊 My meeting was brutal—Mom pushed the match hard, I said studies come first, but she’s furious. I’m writing a poem about our Lodhi Garden scene to stay strong. What happened in your meeting? What’s one thing you’ll do to keep our Holi 2026 dream alive?”

Her words, raw with resilience, were a lifeline, mirroring the clash Sunny had faced in his own home. The morning's meeting—Rajinder's stern push for Neha, the relatives' skepticism about filmmaking, and Priya's quiet hurt—had been a battle, but Sunny's insistence on needing time had won a grudging reprieve. Anastasia's struggle with her mother's anger over the rejected match echoed his own, tightening their bond across the 4,000 miles. Her mention of their Lodhi Garden scene sparked a resolve to find compromises amidst the clashes, to keep their Holi 2026 reunion dream alive.

Sunny typed, heart racing with a mix of relief and determination: "Anastasia, you standing up to your mom is so brave! 😄 My meeting was rough—Dad pushed Neha, relatives called filmmaking a 'fantasy,' but I got time by saying I'll explore careers. I'll research visa fees tonight to keep our Holi dream alive. Your mom's fury sounds heavy—what happened in your clash?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe writing her poem by her snowy window, her defiance fueling his own. The thought of their reunion—her in Delhi, colors flying—made the pressures of his parents' expectations and the frozen savings account (now resolved) feel surmountable.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The filmmaking grant and their shared savings goal were lifelines, but the morning's clash had shown how fragile his compromise was. Priya's wounded glance and Rajinder's warning—"No secrets, Sunny, or this time ends"—lingered, but Anastasia's resilience was a beacon, urging him to find a balance between rebellion and compromise.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, you got time? That's a win! 😊 My mom yelled about 'wasting my future,' threatened to stop my tutoring funds. I stayed calm, said I'll meet her match but only as a friend—bought time. Your visa research keeps us going! I'll add a savings goal to our spreadsheet today. What's one compromise you'd make with your parents to keep our dream safe?" Her defiance and strategic compromise were a spark, her question pushing him to think strategically about navigating his family's pressures.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Your compromise is genius, Anastasia! 😄 I'd compromise by taking a part-time bank job while studying filmmaking online—shows I'm 'serious' but keeps my dreams. Your mom's threats sound tough—how do you stay strong? I'll sketch our Holi reunion tonight." Sending it felt like reinforcing their bridge, their shared clashes and compromises a testament to their strength. The Delhi afternoon buzzed outside, his parents' tension a lingering storm, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to navigate any clash or compromise.

Chapter 77: Romantic Escapes

The Delhi evening was cloaked in a gentle October warmth, the vibrant hum of South Delhi's streets softening as vendors packed up and the faint glow of streetlights mingled with the scent of jasmine from nearby gardens. It was 7:35 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was quieter but still heavy with the morning's clash. Priya was in the living room, folding laundry with a distracted air, while Rajinder watched a news channel, his silence a grudging truce after Sunny's insistence on time for filmmaking. Simran, back from her outing, sent Sunny a quick text: "You're killing it, bhai—stay strong." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's

creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 3:05 PM: "Sunny, a part-time bank job? Smart move to keep them off your back! 😊 I stay strong by dreaming of us—writing poems about our Holi reunion helps. My mom's still mad, but I'm holding firm. What's one romantic escape you'd plan for us in Delhi if I visit?"

Her words, warm and defiant, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the lingering tension of his parents' disapproval. The morning's family meeting—Rajinder's push for Neha, the relatives' skepticism, and Priya's hurt silence—had been a battle, but his compromise for time felt like a small victory. Anastasia's resilience, standing firm against her mother's threats, and her question about a romantic escape sparked a vivid dream, a way to keep their Holi 2026 reunion alive amidst the pressures. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a countdown they could conquer with shared fantasies.

Sunny typed, heart racing with a mix of excitement and longing: "Anastasia, your poems keep us alive—you're incredible! 😄 For a romantic escape in Delhi, I'd take you to Humayun's Tomb at sunset—quiet gardens, golden light, just us sharing stories. My parents are still tense, but I'm researching filmmaking courses tonight. What's one romantic escape you'd plan for us in Saint Petersburg?" He hit send, picturing her in Delhi, her blonde hair glowing in the tomb's gardens, her laughter soft against the evening breeze. The thought of their escape fueled his resolve, despite the weight of Priya's disappointed glances and Rajinder's warning, "No distractions, Sunny."

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The filmmaking grant, unfrozen savings, and their shared visa plans were lifelines, but Anastasia's vision of their reunion was the real spark, weaving their worlds closer. The morning's clash had shown how fragile his compromise was, but her question about a romantic escape was a reminder of why he fought—for a future where they could be together, free from family pressures.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Humayun's Tomb at sunset? Sunny, that sounds like magic! 😊 In Saint Petersburg, I'd take you for a midnight boat ride on the Neva River—stars above, just us, whispering dreams. My mom's watching my spending, but I'm saving for our visa. What's one thing we'd do at Humayun's Tomb to make it ours?" Her words were a vivid promise, her romantic escape tightening their bond, her question deepening their dream of being together.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "A Neva boat ride? I'm there, Anastasia! 😄 At Humayun's Tomb, we'd sit by the fountains, write a poem together—your words, my sketches. I'll add a savings goal to our spreadsheet tonight. What's one thing we'd do on your boat ride to make it unforgettable?" Sending it felt like building their bridge stronger, their romantic escapes a defiance of the pressures—his parents' tension, her mother's scrutiny. The Delhi evening hummed outside, the weight of family expectations lingering, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to carry them through any challenge to that first romantic escape.

Chapter 78: Deepening Intimacy

The Delhi night was cloaked in a gentle October stillness, the vibrant hum of South Delhi's streets fading into a soft murmur of distant traffic and the faint scent of jasmine drifting through the air. It was 9:00 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was quiet but heavy with the lingering tension from the morning's clash over Sunny's refusal to commit to Neha. Priya had retired early, her silence a mix of hurt and resignation, while Rajinder watched a late-night news segment, his grudging compromise for Sunny's "time" feeling fragile. Simran, in her room, had texted Sunny: "You're brave, bhai—keep going." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 4:30 PM: "A poem together at Humayun's Tomb? Sunny, that's so romantic! 😊 On my Neva boat ride, we'd share a quiet kiss under the stars, just us and the water. My mom's still suspicious, but I'm saving harder for our visa. What's one thing we'd share at Humayun's Tomb to make it deeper?"

Her words, warm and intimate, sent a rush of warmth through Sunny, easing the weight of his parents' disapproval. The image of a kiss on her Neva boat ride sparked a longing that made Priya's disappointed glances and Rajinder's stern warnings—"No distractions, Sunny"—feel distant. Their shared dreams of Holi 2026, the filmmaking grant, and their savings spreadsheet were lifelines, but Anastasia's question about deepening their moment at Humayun's Tomb pushed their bond into a new, tender territory. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a countdown to a deeper connection.

Sunny typed, heart racing with a mix of excitement and vulnerability: "Anastasia, a kiss on the Neva? My heart's racing! 😄 At Humayun's Tomb, I'd share a secret fear with you—like how I'm scared of losing you to all this pressure—and listen to yours, under the stars. Parents are still tense, but I'm researching filmmaking courses tonight. What's one secret you'd share with me on that boat ride?" He hit send, picturing her in Delhi, her blue eyes reflecting the golden light of the tomb's gardens, their hands intertwined as they bared their souls. The thought of deepening their intimacy fueled his resolve, despite the family pressures and logistical hurdles.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant money and unfrozen savings were steps toward their reunion, but this moment—Anastasia's willingness to share a kiss, a secret, a dream—was the real spark, weaving their hearts closer. Priya's quiet hurt at dinner—"Sunny, beta, think of your family"—and Rajinder's conditional leniency lingered, but her question about a secret was a reminder of why he fought: for a love that could withstand any storm.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "A secret fear at the tomb? Sunny, that's so deep—I'd feel so close to you. 😊 On the Neva, I'd share my fear of never being enough for my mom, but finding strength with you. My mom's watching my phone, but I'm pushing for our dream. What's one thing we'd do after sharing secrets to feel even closer?" Her words were a tender promise, her vulnerability tightening their bond, her question deepening their vision of intimacy.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Your fear, Anastasia? You're more than enough to me. 😄 After sharing secrets at the tomb, I'd hold your hand, trace a rangoli together, sealing our trust. I'll add visa fees to our spreadsheet tonight. What's one thing we'd do after secrets on the Neva to stay close?" Sending it felt like forging a deeper bond, their shared intimacy a

defiance of the pressures—his parents' tension, her mother's scrutiny. The Delhi night hummed outside, the weight of family expectations lingering, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to deepen through any distance or challenge.

Chapter 79: Cultural Fusion Moments

The Delhi night was cloaked in a gentle October stillness, the vibrant hum of South Delhi's streets fading into a soft murmur of distant scooters and the faint scent of jasmine drifting through the open window. It was 10:30 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was quiet, the tension from the morning's clash over Sunny's refusal to commit to Neha lingering like a heavy fog. Priya was asleep, her earlier silence heavy with hurt, while Rajinder stayed up late in his study, his grudging compromise for Sunny's "time" feeling like a fragile truce. Simran had texted Sunny from her room: "You're unstoppable, bhai—keep dreaming." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:00 PM: "Sunny, tracing a rangoli together after sharing secrets? That's so beautiful! 😊 On the Neva, after secrets, I'd teach you a Russian folk song, our voices blending with the water's flow. My mom's still watching my every move, but I'm saving for our visa. What's one thing we'd do at the tomb to fuse our cultures?"

Her words, warm and intimate, sent a rush of warmth through Sunny, easing the weight of his parents' disapproval. The image of singing with her on the Neva, their voices intertwining, was a vivid dream that made Priya's disappointed glances and Rajinder's stern warnings—"No distractions, Sunny"—fade into the background. Their shared savings, filmmaking grant, and visa plans were lifelines, but Anastasia's question about fusing their cultures at Humayun's Tomb sparked a new vision—a moment where their worlds could blend in harmony. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a countdown to a vibrant fusion.

Sunny typed, heart racing with excitement and tenderness: "Anastasia, a Russian folk song on the Neva? I'd love that! 😄 At Humayun's Tomb, we'd fuse our cultures by you reciting a Russian poem while I sketch a Mughal-inspired design around it—your words, my art. My parents are still quiet, but I'm adding visa fees to our spreadsheet tonight. What's one thing you've learned about India that you'd bring to our fusion moment?" He hit send, picturing her at the tomb, her voice weaving poetry as he drew intricate patterns, their cultures merging under Delhi's golden light. The thought of this fusion fueled his resolve, despite the family pressures and logistical hurdles.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant money and unfrozen savings were steps toward Holi 2026, but Anastasia's vision of blending their worlds was the real spark, deepening their bond. Priya's quiet hurt at breakfast—"Sunny, beta, think of your family"—and Rajinder's conditional leniency lingered, but her question about cultural fusion was a reminder of why he fought: for a love that could bridge any divide.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Your Mughal sketch with my poem? Sunny, that's perfect! 😊 I've learned about India's kathak dance—so graceful! I'd bring a Russian folk dance step to our tomb moment, mixing it with kathak vibes. My mom's still suspicious, but

I’m pushing forward. What’s one thing you’d learn about Russia for our fusion?” Her words were a vivid promise, her idea of blending dances tightening their bond, her question deepening their dream of cultural fusion.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: “Kathak and Russian dance? That’s our moment, Anastasia! 😄 I’d learn a Russian lullaby to sing at the tomb, blending it with your dance. I’ll sketch our fusion scene tonight to keep us strong. What’s one thing you’d do in Delhi to fuse our worlds?” Sending it felt like weaving their cultures closer, their shared vision a defiance of the pressures—his parents’ tension, her mother’s scrutiny. The Delhi night hummed outside, the weight of family expectations lingering, but Anastasia’s words were a beacon, lighting a path to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to fuse their worlds through any distance or challenge.

Chapter 80: Storm Clouds Gather

The Delhi night was cloaked in a restless tension, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi’s streets quieted, the hum of vendors replaced by the soft flicker of streetlights and the distant bark of a stray dog. It was 11:15 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was heavy with the unresolved weight of the morning’s clash over Sunny’s refusal to commit to Neha. Priya had gone to bed, her silence thick with hurt, while Rajinder remained in his study, his grudging compromise for Sunny’s “time” feeling like a ticking clock. Simran had texted from her room: “Bhai, you’re so brave—don’t give up.” Sunny sat at his desk, the fan’s creak a nervous rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:45 PM: “Sunny, a Russian lullaby with kathak? That’s our fusion! 😊 In Delhi, I’d fuse our worlds by wearing a dupatta with my Russian scarf, blending styles. My mom just found my savings spreadsheet—she’s furious, says I’m ‘throwing away my future.’ What’s one thing you’d do in Saint Petersburg to fuse our cultures?”

Her words, vibrant yet tinged with distress, were a lifeline, but the news of her mother’s discovery sent a chill through Sunny. The image of Anastasia blending a dupatta with her Russian scarf was a vivid dream, but her mother’s fury mirrored the storm clouds gathering in his own home. Priya’s disappointed glance at dinner—“Sunny, beta, no more secrets”—and Rajinder’s stern warning, “Your time’s running out,” had tightened the pressure. The filmmaking grant, unfrozen savings, and their visa plans for Holi 2026 were lifelines, but a new setback loomed: Rajinder had found a receipt from Sunny’s tutoring gigs, tucked in a book, and questioned him sharply about “hidden money.” The storm was closing in, threatening their dream.

Sunny typed, heart racing with a mix of empathy and fear: “Anastasia, your mom finding the spreadsheet? That’s rough—I’m here for you. 😔 A dupatta and scarf? Perfect fusion! In Saint Petersburg, I’d fuse our cultures by cooking aloo paratha for you by the Neva, blending our flavors. My dad found a tutoring receipt—grilled me about ‘secrets.’ I’m scared but holding on. What happened with your mom’s outburst?” He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe pacing her apartment, snow falling as her mother’s anger echoed. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a fragile bridge under gathering storm clouds.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his racing thoughts. Their bond, woven through shared dreams and cultural fusions, was a beacon, but the pressures—his parents' suspicions, her mother's fury—were mounting. The receipt incident had shaken him; Rajinder's sharp, "What's this money for, Sunny?" had felt like a warning shot. Anastasia's discovery was a parallel blow, threatening their savings for Holi 2026.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, aloo paratha by the Neva? I'm hungry already! 😊 Mom screamed about 'irresponsible plans,' threatened to freeze my account. I said it's my savings, my choice—she's not speaking to me now. Your dad's receipt find sounds scary! How'd you handle it? Let's add a fusion scene to our film-poem to stay strong." Her resilience, despite the pain, was a spark, her suggestion to keep creating tightening their bond against the storm.

Sunny typed, resolve flickering: "Your strength is unreal, Anastasia! 😄 I told Dad the money's for college stuff—bought time, but he's suspicious. Let's add a scene where our characters cook a fusion meal together, defying families. What did you say to calm your mom?" Sending it felt like a small defiance, their shared dream a shield against the gathering storm clouds. The Delhi night hummed outside, his parents' tension looming, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to weather any storm or setback.

Chapter 81: Parental Opposition Peaks

The Delhi morning was cloaked in a tense haze, the October sun struggling to pierce through a veil of clouds over South Delhi's bustling streets, where vendors' calls mingled with the faint chime of temple bells. It was 10:30 AM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a pressure cooker, the storm clouds of parental opposition peaking after yesterday's confrontations. Priya was in the kitchen, her movements sharp as she chopped vegetables, her silence heavy with hurt. Rajinder sat at the dining table, his face set in a grim line, clutching the tutoring receipt he'd found, his anger barely contained. Simran, sensing the brewing storm, had slipped out for a "study group." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a frantic rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:00 AM: "Sunny, a fusion meal scene? Perfect for our film-poem! 😊 I told Mom it's my money, my dreams—she's still furious, barely talking. I'm holding onto our Holi 2026 plan. Your dad's suspicious about the receipt? What happened? What's one thing we can do to keep our dream alive today?"

Her words, resilient yet strained, were a lifeline, but the news of her mother's continued fury mirrored the escalating opposition in Sunny's home. Yesterday's clash—Rajinder's sharp questioning about the tutoring receipt, "What's this money for, Sunny? No more secrets!"—and Priya's wounded, "You're breaking our trust, beta," had left him reeling. His half-truth about "college stuff" had bought a fragile reprieve, but this morning, Rajinder had called for another family meeting, his tone final: "We settle this today." The filmmaking grant, unfrozen savings, and their visa plans for Holi 2026 felt like a distant dream under the weight of this peak opposition.

Sunny typed, heart pounding with fear and resolve: "Anastasia, your strength keeps me going. 😔 Dad's furious about the receipt, called a meeting today—feels like an ultimatum. I

said it’s for college, but they don’t believe me. Let’s keep our dream alive by writing our film-poem’s fusion meal scene tonight. What happened with your mom’s silence?” He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe writing by her snowy window, her defiance against her mother’s anger a mirror to his own struggle. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a fragile bridge under the storm of parental opposition.

As he waited, the air in the house thickened. Rajinder’s voice boomed from the living room: “Sunny, now!” Heart racing, Sunny stepped into the fray. Priya sat beside Rajinder, her eyes red but resolute. “We found your bank app,” Rajinder said, voice cold. “Secret savings? For what, Sunny? This filmmaking nonsense or something else?” Priya’s voice cracked: “Are you hiding a girl? This stops now.” The accusation hit like a thunderbolt, their opposition peaking. Sunny’s throat tightened, Anastasia’s courage echoing. “It’s for my future,” he said, voice shaky but firm. “Filmmaking’s my dream, not nonsense. I’m not ready for marriage.” Rajinder’s eyes narrowed. “No more lies, or you’re out of this house.” Priya softened, “We just want your happiness, beta.” It was a standoff, not a resolution.

Back in his room, his phone buzzed. Anastasia’s reply: “Sunny, a meeting? Oh no, I’m with you! 😔 Mom’s silence is heavy—she’s watching my bank account now. I’m writing our fusion scene to stay strong. You faced them? So brave! What happened? What’s one thing we can add to our scene to defy this?” Her resilience was a spark, her question a call to fight back against the storm.

Sunny typed, resolve hardening: “Anastasia, you’re my anchor. 😄 They found my savings, threatened to kick me out, but I held my ground. Let’s add our characters vowing to meet despite family bans in our scene. What did you say to your mom’s silence?” Sending it felt like a defiance, their shared dream a shield against the peak of parental opposition. The Delhi morning buzzed outside, his parents’ ultimatum looming, but Anastasia’s words were a beacon, lighting a path to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to weather any storm or ultimatum.

Chapter 82: Anastasia's Homesickness

The Delhi afternoon was cloaked in a restless tension, the October sun casting a muted glow over South Delhi’s bustling streets, where vendors’ calls mingled with the faint scent of roasting corn and temple incense. It was 3:41 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was heavy with the aftermath of the morning’s explosive family meeting. Priya was in the kitchen, her silence sharp as she prepared an early dinner, while Rajinder sat in the living room, his anger simmering after threatening to kick Sunny out over his secret savings. Simran, back from her “study group,” had slipped Sunny a quiet text: “Bhai, you’re so strong—don’t let them break you.” Sunny sat at his desk, the fan’s creak a frantic rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 11:11 AM: “Sunny, you faced them down? You’re my hero! 😊 Our characters vowing to meet despite bans? Perfect for our film-poem! Mom’s silence is killing me—I just nodded when she glared, didn’t fight back. I’m feeling homesick for a place I’ve never been—Delhi with you. What’s one thing you’d do to make me feel at home there?”

Her words, raw with longing and resilience, were a lifeline, but her mention of homesickness struck a deep chord in Sunny. The morning’s clash—Rajinder’s ultimatum, “No more lies, or

you're out," and Priya's pained accusation of hiding a girl—had left him shaken, his secret savings for their Holi 2026 reunion exposed. Anastasia's homesickness for Delhi, a city she'd never seen, mirrored his own ache for a future with her, making the 4,000 miles between them feel both vast and conquerable. Their filmmaking grant, unfrozen savings, and visa plans were fragile hopes under the weight of parental opposition, but her question about feeling at home sparked a resolve to keep their dream alive.

Sunny typed, heart racing with empathy and determination: "Anastasia, homesick for Delhi? That's so beautiful. 😔 I'd make you feel at home by cooking you my mom's aloo paratha, sharing stories on my rooftop under the stars. My parents are furious—Dad threatened to kick me out, but I stood firm. Let's write our film-poem's vow scene tonight. Why do you feel homesick for Delhi?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe staring out at snowy canals, yearning for his chaotic city. The thought of her feeling at home with him fueled his courage, despite the storm of his parents' anger.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The morning's ultimatum had been a peak of opposition, but Anastasia's homesickness was a reminder of their shared dream—a future where she could belong in his world. Rajinder's discovery of his savings and Priya's hurt lingered, but her longing for Delhi was a spark, urging him to fight for their reunion.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Aloo paratha on your rooftop? Sunny, I'd feel so at home! 😊 I'm homesick for Delhi because your stories—Chandni Chowk, Holi colors—feel like where I belong, with you. Mom's silence is cold; she's still watching my account. Let's make our vow scene fierce! What happened with your dad's threat?" Her words were a tender promise, her homesickness tightening their bond, her question about the vow scene a call to defy their challenges.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Your homesickness for my city? That's everything, Anastasia! 😄 Dad's threat was scary—I said the savings are for my future, not lies. Let's make our characters' vow a promise to defy all odds. What's one thing you'd bring from Saint Petersburg to feel at home in Delhi?" Sending it felt like reinforcing their bridge, her homesickness a spark against the storm of parental opposition. The Delhi afternoon hummed outside, his parents' anger looming, but Anastasia's words were a beacon, lighting a path to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to weather any ultimatum or distance.

Chapter 83: Sunny's Sacrifice

The Delhi evening was cloaked in a restless tension, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets quieted, the hum of vendors fading into the soft glow of streetlights and the distant murmur of evening prayers. It was 7:30 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a cauldron of unresolved conflict after the morning's explosive family meeting. Priya was in the living room, arranging cushions with a heavy silence, her eyes still red from the morning's clash. Rajinder sat at the dining table, his face stern, the tutoring receipt and bank app discovery fueling his ultimatum: "No more lies, or you're out." Simran, sensing the storm, had texted Sunny from her room: "Bhai, you're fighting for love—don't stop." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a frantic rhythm, his phone glowing with

Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 3:00 PM: "Sunny, your rooftop and aloo paratha? My heart's there already! 😊 I'd bring my Russian poetry book to Delhi, reading to you to feel at home. Mom's silence is icy—she's threatening to cut my funds. Your dad's threat sounds terrifying—what happened? Let's make our vow scene unbreakable. What's one thing you'd sacrifice for our Holi 2026 reunion?"

Her words, tender yet fierce, were a lifeline, her homesickness for Delhi tightening their bond across the 4,000 miles. The image of her reading Russian poetry on his rooftop was a vivid dream, but her question about sacrifice struck deep, forcing Sunny to confront the stakes. The morning's clash—Rajinder's threat to kick him out, Priya's pained accusation of hiding a girl—had pushed their opposition to a peak. His filmmaking grant and unfrozen savings were lifelines, but Rajinder's discovery of his "secret money" had jeopardled a new ultimatum, and Sunny knew a sacrifice might be needed to protect their Holi 2026 dream.

Sunny typed, heart pounding with a mix of fear and resolve: "Anastasia, your poetry book in Delhi? I can't wait! 😔 Dad's threat was brutal—I said the savings are for my future, but he's watching me now. I'd sacrifice my freedom at home, maybe move out to a hostel, to keep our dream safe. Let's write our vow scene tonight, make it fierce. What's one sacrifice you'd make for us?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, clutching her poetry book, snow falling as she faced her mother's icy silence. The thought of moving out—a drastic step to escape his parents' control—felt like a sacrifice worth making for their reunion, despite the pain it would cause.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his racing thoughts. The grant and savings were steps toward Holi 2026, but Rajinder's ultimatum and Priya's hurt were storm clouds threatening to unravel everything. Anastasia's homesickness and defiance were a spark, urging him to make a bold move. The idea of a hostel, funded by his grant and tutoring, was a rebellion, but it meant risking his family's trust.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, moving out? That's huge—you're so brave! 😊 I'd sacrifice my tutoring job if Mom cuts my funds, find another way to save for our visa. Mom's silence is heavy, but I'm writing our vow scene now. What happened with your dad's grilling? What's one thing our characters vow in our scene?" Her resilience was a beacon, her willingness to sacrifice mirroring his, their shared dream tightening their bond against the storm.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Your sacrifice is incredible, Anastasia! 😄 Dad grilled me hard—said I'm betraying them, but I held firm. Our characters vow to meet no matter the cost, even if families disown them. I'll sketch our vow scene tonight. How do you handle your mom's silence?" Sending it felt like a commitment, his sacrifice a step toward their bridge. The Delhi evening hummed outside, his parents' opposition looming, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to endure any sacrifice or storm.

Chapter 84: United Against Odds

The Delhi night was cloaked in a tense stillness, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets quieted, the hum of distant traffic blending with the soft flicker of

streetlights and the occasional bark of a stray dog. It was 11:00 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was heavy with the unresolved weight of the morning's explosive confrontation. Priya had gone to bed, her silence thick with hurt, while Rajinder remained in his study, his ultimatum—"No more lies, or you're out"—echoing like a thunderclap. Simran had texted Sunny from her room: "Bhai, you're fighting for something real—hold on." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a restless rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:30 PM: "Sunny, our characters vowing to meet no matter the cost? That's us! 😊 I handle Mom's silence by writing—she's still not talking, but I won't back down. I'd sacrifice my job for our Holi 2026 dream. You moving out? That's huge—what happened with your dad? What's one thing we can do tonight to stay united?"

Her words, fierce and unwavering, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the storm of his parents' opposition. The image of their film-poem characters vowing to defy all odds mirrored their own resolve, making the 4,000 miles between Delhi and Saint Petersburg feel like a challenge they could conquer together. Rajinder's grilling about the tutoring receipt and secret savings, Priya's pained accusation of betrayal, and the threat of being kicked out had pushed Sunny to the edge, but Anastasia's strength—facing her mother's icy silence—ignited a fire in him. Their filmmaking grant, unfrozen savings, and visa plans for Holi 2026 were fragile hopes, but her question about staying united sparked a resolve to stand together against the odds.

Sunny typed, heart pounding with determination: "Anastasia, your defiance is my strength! 😄 Dad's grilling was brutal—called me a traitor, but I said the savings are for my future, not lies. Moving out's a last resort, but I'm ready. Tonight, let's write a line for our characters' vow to keep us united. My parents are watching me, but I'm sketching our scene. What's one line you'd give our characters' vow?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, pen in hand, snow falling outside as she wrote their story. The thought of their united front—her sacrificing her job, him risking his home—fueled his courage, despite the looming storm of parental opposition.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant and savings were lifelines, but their shared dream of Holi 2026 was the real anchor, a vow to defy family pressures and logistical hurdles. Rajinder's threat and Priya's hurt lingered, but Anastasia's resilience was a spark, urging him to fight for their future. The idea of writing a vow together tonight felt like a tangible act of unity, a shield against the storm.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, you standing up to your dad? You're unstoppable! 😊 Mom's silence is heavy, but I'm writing our vow to stay strong. I'd give our characters: 'We'll cross oceans, defy bans, for love.' Let's write more tonight. What's one thing you're holding onto to face your parents' storm?" Her words were a beacon, her vow line a powerful echo of their resolve, her question deepening their united front.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Your vow line is perfect, Anastasia! 😄 I'm holding onto our Holi 2026 dream—you in Delhi, colors flying. My line: 'No walls, no distance, will break our promise.' Let's finish the scene tonight. What's one thing you're holding onto against your mom's silence?" Sending it felt like forging an unbreakable bond, their united defiance a shield against the odds. The Delhi night hummed outside, his parents' ultimatum looming,

but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to their reunion. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to stand united against any storm or sacrifice.

Chapter 85: Visa Extensions and Fears

The Delhi night was cloaked in a tense stillness, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets quieted, the hum of distant scooters blending with the soft glow of streetlights and the occasional chirp of crickets. It was 11:45 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was heavy with the unresolved tension from the morning's explosive confrontation. Priya was asleep, her silence thick with hurt, while Rajinder lingered in his study, his ultimatum—"No more lies, or you're out"—still ringing in Sunny's ears. Simran had texted from her room: "Bhai, you're fighting for love—stay strong." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a restless rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 7:15 PM: "Sunny, your vow line—'No walls, no distance, will break our promise'—it's perfect! 😊 I'm holding onto our dream of Chandni Chowk, tasting golgappas with you. Mom's silence is cold, but I'm writing our scene. I checked visa rules today—extensions might be tricky. What's one thing you're holding onto to face your parents' storm?"

Her words, fierce yet tinged with worry, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the weight of his parents' opposition. The image of their film-poem characters vowing to defy all odds mirrored their resolve, but her mention of visa extensions stirred a new fear. Rajinder's discovery of his secret savings and Priya's accusation of betrayal had already pushed Sunny to the edge, and the threat of being kicked out loomed large. The filmmaking grant and unfrozen savings were lifelines for their Holi 2026 reunion, but the complexities of visas—extensions, approvals, costs—added a fresh layer of anxiety. Her question about facing his parents' storm sparked a resolve to confront these fears together.

Sunny typed, heart pounding with a mix of determination and dread: "Anastasia, Chandni Chowk with you keeps me going! 😔 Visa extensions sound complicated—scary. I'm holding onto our rooftop moment, sketching you with colors. Dad's threat is heavy, but I said the savings are for my future. Let's research visa extensions tonight for our plan. What's one fear you have about the visa process?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe hunched over her laptop, snow falling as she navigated visa websites. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a challenge they could face united, their bond a bridge against the storm of parental opposition and bureaucratic hurdles.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his racing thoughts. The grant and savings were steps toward Holi 2026, but Rajinder's ultimatum and Priya's hurt were storm clouds, and now visa extensions added a new shadow. Anastasia's resilience—writing their vow scene despite her mother's silence—was a spark, urging him to tackle the visa fears head-on. The idea of researching together tonight felt like a tangible act of defiance, a way to keep their dream alive.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, our rooftop moment? I'm holding onto that too! 😊 My biggest visa fear? Getting denied and losing our Holi dream. Mom's silence is worse—she's checking my bank app now. Let's look up Indian visa rules tonight. What's one

fear you have about visas?" Her words were a beacon, her fear mirroring his, her suggestion to research together tightening their united front against the odds.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Anastasia, a visa denial? That's my fear too—losing you to red tape. 😄 Let's add visa extension steps to our spreadsheet tonight. I'm holding onto our vow scene to face Dad's threat. What's one thing you'll do to ease your visa fears?" Sending it felt like reinforcing their bridge, their shared fears a call to stand stronger together. The Delhi night hummed outside, his parents' ultimatum looming, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their bond felt like a promise, strong enough to weather any storm, fear, or bureaucratic challenge.

Chapter 86: The Ultimatum

The Delhi morning was cloaked in a tense haze, the October sun struggling to break through a veil of clouds over South Delhi's bustling streets, where vendors' shouts mingled with the faint chime of temple bells. It was 10:00 AM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a pressure cooker, the storm of parental opposition reaching a breaking point. Priya was in the kitchen, her movements sharp and silent, her hurt from yesterday's clash palpable. Rajinder sat at the dining table, his face a mask of resolve, clutching a printout of Sunny's bank statement he'd demanded from the bank, his ultimatum ready to strike. Simran, sensing the impending explosion, had slipped out for a "college errand," texting Sunny: "Bhai, brace yourself—love you." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a frantic rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 5:30 AM: "Sunny, a visa denial? It's my nightmare too, but our vow scene keeps me strong! 😊 I'll ease my fears by reading more about Indian visa rules today. Mom's checking my bank app—she's still silent but furious. What's one thing you'll do to ease your visa fears? How's your parents' storm?"

Her words, resilient yet laced with worry, were a lifeline, but the weight of her mother's scrutiny and the looming visa hurdles paled against the storm brewing in Sunny's home. Yesterday's confrontation—Rajinder's discovery of his secret savings, Priya's accusation of betrayal, and the threat to kick him out—had escalated overnight. Rajinder's demand for the bank statement had confirmed his suspicions, and now a final ultimatum was imminent. The filmmaking grant, unfrozen savings, and their Holi 2026 plans felt fragile under this new pressure. Anastasia's question about easing visa fears sparked a resolve to face this crisis, but the fear of losing his family—or her—gripped him.

Sunny typed, heart pounding with dread and determination: "Anastasia, your strength is everything. 😔 I'll ease visa fears by mapping out a budget for fees tonight. Dad got my bank statement—called a meeting today, feels like the end. I'm scared but holding onto our Holi dream. What happened with your mom's bank app checks?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe hunched over visa websites, snow falling as her mother's silence loomed. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a fragile bridge under the weight of this ultimatum.

The air in the house thickened as Rajinder's voice boomed: "Sunny, now!" Heart racing, Sunny stepped into the living room. Priya sat beside Rajinder, her eyes red but resolute, the bank statement on the table. "You've been hiding money," Rajinder said, voice cold. "For

what? A girl? This filmmaking foolishness? You choose now—our family's plan or you're out." Priya's voice cracked: "Sunny, beta, we love you, but this betrayal stops today." The ultimatum hit like a thunderbolt. Sunny's throat tightened, Anastasia's vow scene echoing. "It's for my future," he said, voice shaking but firm. "I want filmmaking, not marriage now. I'm not betraying you—I'm trying to be me." Rajinder's eyes blazed. "One month, Sunny. Get in line, or you're on your own." Priya's sob broke the silence.

Back in his room, his phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, a bank statement? Oh no, that's terrifying! 😔 Mom saw my savings—yelled about 'running away,' but I said it's for my studies. She's watching closer now. You faced their ultimatum? So brave! What's one thing we can do tonight to stay strong?" Her resilience was a spark, her own struggle mirroring his, their shared dream a shield against the odds.

Sunny typed, resolve flickering: "Anastasia, your defiance keeps me going! 😄 Dad gave me a month to 'get in line' or I'm out. Let's write our film-poem's vow scene tonight, make it unbreakable. What did you say to your mom's yelling?" Sending it felt like a defiance, their bond a beacon against the ultimatum's storm. The Delhi morning hummed outside, his parents' deadline looming, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to endure any ultimatum or distance.

Chapter 87: Heartbreaking Goodbyes?

The Delhi evening was cloaked in a heavy stillness, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets quieted, the hum of vendors fading into the soft glow of streetlights and the distant murmur of evening prayers. It was 8:00 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a cauldron of raw emotion after the morning's devastating ultimatum. Priya was in her room, her silence broken by occasional muffled sobs, while Rajinder sat in the living room, his face set in a grim resolve, the bank statement still clutched in his hand. Simran had returned from her "college errand," texting Sunny: "Bhai, I'm here for you—don't let them win." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a mournful rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 3:30 PM: "Sunny, a one-month ultimatum? My heart's breaking for you! 😔 I told Mom my savings are for studies, but she's threatening to cut my internet. Our vow scene will keep us strong—let's write it tonight. What happened with your dad's deadline? What's one thing we can do to avoid saying goodbye?"

Her words, raw with empathy and defiance, were a lifeline, but the fear of heartbreaking goodbyes loomed large. Rajinder's ultimatum—"One month, Sunny, or you're on your own"—and Priya's tearful plea, "We just want your happiness, beta," had pushed Sunny to the edge. The filmmaking grant, unfrozen savings, and their Holi 2026 plans felt like fragile threads under the weight of this deadline. Anastasia's own struggle—her mother's threat to cut her internet—mirrored his, making the 4,000 miles between them feel like a chasm they might not cross. Her question about avoiding goodbyes sparked a desperate resolve to fight for their dream, no matter the cost.

Sunny typed, heart pounding with fear and determination: "Anastasia, your strength keeps me breathing. 😔 Dad's deadline is brutal—he says I'm betraying them, but I said it's my

future, not lies. I'm scared of losing you or my family. Let's write our vow scene tonight and add a promise to never say goodbye. What happened with your mom's threat?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe clutching her phone, snow falling as her mother's silence tightened its grip. The thought of their vow scene—a promise to defy all odds—fueled his courage, despite the storm of his parents' ultimatum.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his racing thoughts. The grant and savings were lifelines, but Rajinder's one-month deadline was a guillotine, threatening to sever his dreams of filmmaking and Anastasia. Priya's sobs echoed in his mind, but Anastasia's defiance—facing her mother's threats—was a spark, urging him to find a way to avoid goodbye. The idea of writing their vow scene together felt like a shield against the heartbreak looming.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, losing you? I can't bear it! 😔 Mom's threat is real—she locked my bank app, said no internet if I don't 'focus.' I told her I'm building my future, not running. Our vow scene's my anchor—let's make it unbreakable. What happened in your meeting? What's one promise we can make tonight to keep us together?" Her resilience was a beacon, her fear of losing him mirroring his own, her question a call to stand united against the odds.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Anastasia, your fight is mine—we won't say goodbye! 😄 Dad said I have a month to choose their path or leave. Our promise: we'll meet for Holi 2026, no matter what families do. Let's write that in our scene tonight. How do you handle your mom's lock on your app?" Sending it felt like a vow to defy the heartbreak, their bond a shield against the storm of ultimatums. The Delhi evening hummed outside, his parents' deadline looming, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to avoid any goodbye and weather any storm.

Chapter 88: Long-Distance Again

The Delhi night was cloaked in a heavy stillness, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets quieted, the hum of distant traffic blending with the soft glow of streetlights and the occasional chirp of crickets. It was 11:30 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a cauldron of unresolved pain after the morning's crushing ultimatum. Priya was asleep, her earlier sobs leaving a lingering ache, while Rajinder had retreated to his study, his one-month deadline—"Get in line, or you're out"—hanging like a guillotine. Simran had texted Sunny from her room: "Bhai, you're fighting for something bigger—don't give up." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a mournful rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 7:00 PM: "Sunny, our promise for Holi 2026? It's everything! 😊 Mom locked my bank app, said I'm 'chasing fantasies.' I told her it's my life—she's still furious. Our vow scene's keeping me strong. How'd you handle your dad's ultimatum? What's one thing we can do tonight to make long-distance feel closer?"

Her words, fierce yet tinged with pain, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the despair of his parents' ultimatum. The image of their Holi 2026 reunion—Anastasia in Delhi, colors flying—felt like a beacon, but her mother's actions and the locked bank app echoed his own

struggle, making the 4,000 miles between them feel vast again. Rajinder's threat to kick him out, Priya's tearful plea, and the pressure on their filmmaking grant and savings for visas weighed heavily. Anastasia's question about making long-distance feel closer sparked a resolve to bridge the gap, despite the heartbreak threatening to tear them apart.

Sunny typed, heart pounding with a mix of fear and determination: "Anastasia, your defiance is my anchor. 😔 Dad's ultimatum is brutal—one month to choose their path or I'm out. I said it's my future, not betrayal. Mom locked your app? That's awful. Tonight, let's do a video call—read our vow scene aloud, make it real. What happened with your mom's anger?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe clutching her phone by her snowy window, her resolve mirroring his. The thought of a video call—seeing her face, hearing her voice—felt like a way to shrink the distance, despite the storm of parental opposition.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant and savings were fragile hopes, but Rajinder's deadline and Priya's hurt were a storm threatening to unravel their Holi 2026 dream. Anastasia's fight—standing up to her mother's fury—was a spark, urging him to find ways to make their long-distance bond feel alive. The idea of a video call, sharing their vow scene, was a small act of defiance against the heartbreak looming.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, a video call? Yes, let's make it real! 😊 Mom's anger exploded—she said I'm 'ruining my life,' but I told her I'm building it with someone who matters. Your dad's deadline sounds terrifying—you're so brave! Let's read our vow scene and add a new promise tonight. What's one moment you want to share on our call?" Her resilience was a beacon, her fight against her mother's wrath tightening their bond, her question deepening their connection across the miles.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Anastasia, you fighting for us? You're incredible! 😄 On our call, I want to share a sketch of our Holi reunion—you in colors, smiling. I'll face Dad's deadline by staying calm, focusing on our dream. Let's promise to never let distance win. What's one moment you'll share on the call?" Sending it felt like closing the gap, their video call a bridge against the storm of ultimatums. The Delhi night hummed outside, his parents' deadline looming, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to make long-distance feel closer, no matter the odds.

Chapter 89: Fighting for Forever

The Delhi night was cloaked in a heavy stillness, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets quieted, the hum of distant scooters fading into the soft glow of streetlights and the occasional rustle of leaves. It was 12:15 AM, October 13, 2025, and the Singh household was a silent battleground after the day's crushing ultimatum. Priya was asleep, her earlier sobs a lingering wound, while Rajinder had finally left his study, his one-month deadline—"Get in line, or you're out"—echoing like a death knell. Simran had texted Sunny from her room: "Bhai, you're fighting for love—don't let them break you." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a mournful rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 7:45 PM, October 12, 2025: "Sunny, a sketch of our Holi reunion? I'm tearing up! 😊 I'll share a poem about our Chandni Chowk moment

on our call. Mom's still furious—locked my bank app, said I'm 'lost.' Your dad's deadline sounds brutal—you're so strong! Let's promise distance won't win. What's one thing we'll do on our call to fight for forever?"

Her words, raw with love and defiance, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the despair of his parents' ultimatum. The image of their video call—her reading a poem, him sharing a sketch—felt like a tangible way to fight for their Holi 2026 reunion, making the 4,000 miles between them feel conquerable. Rajinder's threat to kick him out, Priya's tearful accusation of betrayal, and the pressure on their filmmaking grant and savings weighed heavily, but Anastasia's fight—facing her mother's wrath and locked bank app—mirrored his own, igniting a resolve to fight for forever. Her question about their call sparked a vision to make their bond unbreakable.

Sunny typed, heart pounding with a mix of fear and determination: "Anastasia, your poem on our call? I can't wait! 😄 Mom's locked app is awful, but you're unstoppable. Dad's deadline is crushing—I told him it's my future, not lies. On our call, let's vow to meet no matter what, and I'll show you my Holi sketch. What happened with your mom's latest outburst?" He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe clutching her notebook, snow falling as she faced her mother's anger. The thought of their video call—sharing their art, vowing to defy the odds—felt like a weapon against the storm of parental opposition.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his racing thoughts. The grant and savings were fragile hopes, but Rajinder's one-month deadline and Priya's hurt were a guillotine. Anastasia's resilience—writing poetry despite her mother's threats—was a spark, urging him to make their long-distance bond a fortress. The video call, set for tonight, was a chance to fight for forever, to prove their love could outlast any ultimatum.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, your Holi sketch? My heart's racing! 😊 Mom exploded—called me 'selfish,' said I'm choosing a 'stranger' over family. I said you're my future, not a stranger. Your dad's deadline is terrifying—you're my hero! On our call, let's plan one real step for Holi 2026. What's one vow you'll make tonight?" Her defiance was a beacon, her words tightening their bond, her question a call to cement their fight for forever.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Anastasia, you calling me your future? That's everything! 😄 Dad said I'm breaking their trust, but I'm holding firm. My vow: I'll save every rupee, even if I move out, for our Holi reunion. Let's plan visa apps on our call. What's one vow you'll make?" Sending it felt like a battle cry, their video call a shield against the storm of ultimatums. The Delhi night hummed outside, his parents' deadline looming, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to fight for forever, no matter the distance or odds.

Chapter 90: A Bold Proposal

The Delhi night was cloaked in a tense hush, the October air carrying a faint chill as South Delhi's streets settled into a soft murmur of distant traffic and the occasional chirp of crickets. It was 1:00 AM, October 13, 2025, and the Singh household was silent, the weight of Rajinder's one-month ultimatum—"Get in line, or you're out"—hanging like a guillotine. Priya's earlier sobs had faded, but her hurt lingered in the air, while Rajinder slept, his

resolve unshaken. Simran had texted Sunny from her room: “Bhai, you’re fighting for something epic—keep going.” Sunny sat at his desk, the fan’s creak a restless rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 8:30 PM, October 12, 2025: “Sunny, your vow to save every rupee? You’re my everything! 😊 I told Mom you’re my future—she called it ‘madness,’ but I’m done hiding. My vow: I’ll find a new job if she cuts my funds, for our Holi 2026. Your dad’s deadline sounds crushing—what happened? What’s one real step we’ll plan on our call tonight?”

Her words, fierce and unwavering, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the despair of his parents’ ultimatum. The image of their video call—sharing their Holi 2026 vows, planning visa applications—felt like a beacon, but her bold defiance of her mother sparked a daring idea in Sunny: a proposal, not of marriage, but of a shared future, a commitment to meet no matter the odds. Rajinder’s threat to kick him out, Priya’s accusation of betrayal, and the pressure on their filmmaking grant and savings loomed large, but Anastasia’s vow to find a new job fueled his courage. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a challenge they could conquer with a bold leap.

Sunny typed, heart pounding with a mix of fear and exhilaration: “Anastasia, you calling me your future? My heart’s soaring! 😄 Dad’s deadline is brutal—said I’m breaking their trust, but I stood firm. On our call, let’s plan a bold step: a joint savings account for our visas, a vow to meet for Holi 2026, no matter what. I want to propose we commit to this—together, forever. What happened with your mom’s ‘madness’ outburst?” He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe pacing her apartment, snow falling as she faced her mother’s wrath. The idea of a joint account—a tangible symbol of their commitment—felt like a rebellion against the storm of parental opposition.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan’s hum blending with his racing thoughts. The grant and savings were fragile hopes, but Rajinder’s ultimatum and Priya’s hurt were a storm threatening to unravel their Holi 2026 dream. Anastasia’s defiance—calling him her future—was a spark, urging him to make this bold proposal. The video call, now just hours away, was a chance to cement their fight for forever.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia’s reply: “Sunny, a joint savings account? A proposal to commit? I’m all in! 😊 Mom screamed I’m ‘throwing away my life,’ but I said you’re my home. Your dad’s threat is terrifying—you’re so brave! On our call, let’s set up that account and vow to meet. What’s one thing you’ll say in your proposal?” Her words were a beacon, her acceptance of his proposal tightening their bond, her question deepening their commitment against the odds.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: “Anastasia, you saying I’m your home? That’s everything! 😄 I’ll propose: ‘Let’s build our future, Holi 2026, no matter the storms.’ I’ll face Dad’s deadline by saving quietly, maybe moving out. What’s one thing you’ll say in our vow?” Sending it felt like a battle cry, their joint account and proposal a shield against the ultimatums. The Delhi night hummed outside, his parents’ deadline looming, but Anastasia’s words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to make this bold proposal a reality, no matter the distance or opposition.

Chapter 91: Planning the Leap

The Delhi morning was cloaked in a tense haze, the October sun casting a muted glow over South Delhi's bustling streets, where vendors' shouts mingled with the faint chime of temple bells and the scent of roasting peanuts. It was 10:00 AM, October 13, 2025, and the Singh household was a silent battlefield, the weight of Rajinder's one-month ultimatum—"Get in line, or you're out"—still reverberating. Priya was in the kitchen, her movements slow and heavy with unspoken hurt, while Rajinder sat at the dining table, his face stern, reviewing papers with a grim resolve. Simran had slipped out for a "college project," texting Sunny: "Bhai, your love is worth it—stay strong." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a restless rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 5:30 AM: "Sunny, you calling me your home? My heart's yours! 😊 I'll vow: 'We'll meet for Holi 2026, building our future together, no matter what.' Mom's still furious, threatening to cut my internet, but I'm searching for new tutoring jobs. Your proposal is everything—what happened with your dad's deadline? What's one thing we'll plan for our joint account on our call?"

Her words, fierce and filled with love, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the despair of his parents' ultimatum. The image of their video call—vowing to meet for Holi 2026, setting up a joint savings account—felt like a bold leap toward their shared future, making the 4,000 miles between them feel conquerable. Rajinder's threat to kick him out, Priya's tearful accusation of betrayal, and the pressure on their filmmaking grant and savings loomed large, but Anastasia's vow and her search for new jobs sparked a resolve to plan this leap together. Her question about their joint account fueled his determination to make their commitment real.

Sunny typed, heart racing with a mix of exhilaration and fear: "Anastasia, your vow is our anchor! 😄 Dad's deadline is crushing—said I'm tearing the family apart, but I held firm for my future. On our call, let's plan the joint account—set a monthly savings goal, maybe 10,000 rupees and 5,000 rubles? Mom's internet threat sounds awful—what happened? I'm sketching our Holi vow scene to stay strong." He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe sipping tea as dawn broke, searching for jobs despite her mother's fury. The thought of their joint account—a tangible symbol of their leap—felt like a rebellion against the storm of parental opposition.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his racing thoughts. The grant and savings were fragile hopes, but Rajinder's ultimatum and Priya's hurt were a guillotine. Anastasia's defiance—pushing forward despite her mother's threats—was a spark, urging him to plan this leap with precision. The video call, now just hours away, was a chance to solidify their commitment, to make their bold proposal a reality.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, a joint account with goals? I'm so ready! 😊 Mom yelled again—said I'm 'betraying our family,' but I told her I'm choosing my happiness. Your dad's words sound so heavy—you're my hero! Let's plan to open the account online tonight and list visa steps. What's one thing you'll say on our call to make this leap real?" Her words were a beacon, her defiance tightening their bond, her question deepening their resolve to plan their future against the odds.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: “Anastasia, choosing your happiness? You’re incredible! 😄 I’ll say: ‘Our joint account is our promise—Holi 2026, we’ll be together.’ Dad’s deadline is terrifying, but I’m saving quietly. Let’s list visa documents tonight. What’s one thing you’ll say to make our leap real?” Sending it felt like a battle cry, their joint account a shield against the storm of ultimatums. The Delhi morning hummed outside, his parents’ deadline looming, but Anastasia’s words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to plan this bold leap and overcome any distance or opposition.

Chapter 92: Cultural Weddings Dreamed

The Delhi afternoon was cloaked in a tense calm, the October sun casting a warm glow over South Delhi’s bustling streets, where vendors’ shouts mingled with the faint scent of jasmine and the distant chime of temple bells. It was 4:00 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a silent battleground, the weight of Rajinder’s one-month ultimatum—“Get in line, or you’re out”—still hanging heavy. Priya was in the living room, arranging flowers with a distracted air, her hurt palpable, while Rajinder was out meeting a colleague, his stern resolve unshaken. Simran had returned from her “college project,” texting Sunny: “Bhai, you’re fighting for love—don’t let them crush you.” Sunny sat at his desk, the fan’s creak a restless rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 11:30 AM: “Sunny, our joint account as a promise? My heart’s racing! 😊 I’ll say: ‘Holi 2026, our love will win, no matter the odds.’ Mom’s still furious, checking my emails now. Your dad’s deadline sounds brutal—you’re so brave! Let’s plan visa steps tonight. What’s one dream you have for our future together?”

Her words, vibrant and filled with love, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the despair of his parents’ ultimatum. The image of their video call—setting up a joint savings account, vowing for Holi 2026—felt like a bold leap, but her question about their future sparked a vivid, daring dream: a cultural wedding blending their worlds. Rajinder’s threat to kick him out, Priya’s tearful accusation of betrayal, and the pressure on their filmmaking grant and savings loomed large, but Anastasia’s defiance—facing her mother’s invasive scrutiny—ignited a resolve to dream bigger. The 4,000 miles between them felt like a countdown to a shared future.

Sunny typed, heart pounding with a mix of exhilaration and longing: “Anastasia, your vow is our strength! 😄 I dream of a future wedding—Holi colors in Delhi, Russian folk songs under the stars, blending our cultures. Dad’s deadline is crushing—said I’m tearing the family apart, but I stood firm. Mom’s checking your emails? That’s intense—what happened? Let’s open our joint account tonight. What’s one cultural wedding moment you’d dream of?” He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe clutching her notebook, snow falling as she faced her mother’s wrath. The thought of a wedding fusing their traditions—rangoli and Russian dances—was a rebellion against the storm of parental opposition.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan’s hum blending with his thoughts. The grant and savings were fragile hopes, but Rajinder’s ultimatum and Priya’s hurt were a guillotine. Anastasia’s resilience—pushing forward despite her mother’s surveillance—was a spark, urging him to dream of a cultural wedding as a symbol of their unbreakable bond. The video call, now hours away, was a chance to plan their leap and weave this dream into reality.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "A wedding with Holi colors and Russian songs? Sunny, I'm dreaming with you! 😊 I'd want a moment where we exchange vows in Hindi and Russian, blending our words. Mom found my visa research emails—called me 'reckless,' but I said it's my future. Your dad's deadline is terrifying—you're my hero! What's one cultural wedding detail you'd add tonight?" Her words were a beacon, her dream of bilingual vows tightening their bond, her question deepening their vision of a shared future.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Bilingual vows? Perfect, Anastasia! 😄 I'd add a fusion dance—kathak with Russian folk steps—at our wedding. I'll face Dad's deadline by saving quietly, maybe moving out. Let's list visa documents tonight. What's one wedding detail you'd add?" Sending it felt like a battle cry, their cultural wedding dream a shield against the storm of ultimatums. The Delhi afternoon hummed outside, his parents' deadline looming, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026 and beyond. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to dream of a cultural wedding and overcome any distance or opposition.

Chapter 93: Family Reconciliations

The Delhi evening was cloaked in a gentle October warmth, the vibrant hum of South Delhi's streets softening as vendors packed up and the faint scent of jasmine mingled with the glow of streetlights. It was 7:30 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a fragile truce after the morning's crushing ultimatum. Priya was in the kitchen, her movements slower, a flicker of hope in her eyes after a quiet moment with Sunny earlier, where he'd helped her cook, hinting at his dreams without defiance. Rajinder was in the living room, his stern resolve softening slightly after Priya's urging to "listen to our son." Simran had texted Sunny: "Bhai, saw Mom smile—you're getting through." Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 3:00 PM: "Sunny, a fusion dance at our wedding? I'm in love with that dream! 😊 I'd add a moment where we light a diya and a Russian candle together, uniting our traditions. Mom's still angry, but I left her a note about my dreams—she hasn't responded yet. Your dad's deadline sounds heavy—what happened? What's one reconciliation step you'd take with your parents?"

Her words, vibrant and hopeful, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the weight of his parents' ultimatum. The dream of a cultural wedding—kathak and Russian folk steps, bilingual vows, a diya and candle—felt like a beacon, making the 4,000 miles between them a countdown to a shared future. Rajinder's threat to kick him out and Priya's tearful accusation of betrayal still loomed, but Priya's softened demeanor today sparked hope for reconciliation. Anastasia's note to her mother, a brave step toward understanding, inspired Sunny to find a way to bridge the gap with his family. Their filmmaking grant, unfrozen savings, and visa plans for Holi 2026 were lifelines, but her question about reconciliation pushed him to act.

Sunny typed, heart racing with a mix of hope and caution: "Anastasia, a diya and candle? That's perfect for our wedding dream! 😄 I helped Mom cook today—she smiled, a small win. Dad's deadline is brutal—still says I'm betraying them, but I'm trying. I'd reconcile by sharing a filmmaking idea with them, showing it's serious. Mom's note sounds brave—what happened? Let's plan visa steps on our call tonight." He hit send, picturing her in Saint

Petersburg, maybe waiting anxiously for her mother's response, snow falling outside. The thought of their wedding, blending their worlds, fueled his resolve to mend things at home, despite the storm of opposition.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant and savings were steps toward Holi 2026, but Rajinder's ultimatum and Priya's hurt were a guillotine. Anastasia's note to her mother was a spark, urging him to try reconciliation—maybe a conversation with Priya, showing his passion for filmmaking without mentioning Anastasia yet. The video call tonight, planning visa steps, was a chance to keep their dream alive while navigating family tensions.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, cooking with your mom? That's huge! 😊 Mom read my note—didn't yell, just stared silently, but it's a start. Your dad's deadline is scary—you're so strong! I'd reconcile by showing Mom my poetry, proving my dreams matter. What's one filmmaking idea you'd share with your parents?" Her words were a beacon, her small step with her mother mirroring his, her question deepening their resolve to balance family and dreams.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Anastasia, your note's a brave move! 😄 I'd share a short film idea about Delhi's street life, showing it's real work. Mom's silence is softening—Dad's not there yet. Let's vow to keep reconciling on our call. What's one thing you'd say to your mom for reconciliation?" Sending it felt like building their bridge stronger, their reconciliation efforts a shield against ultimatums. The Delhi evening hummed outside, his parents' tension lingering, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to mend family ties and conquer any distance.

Chapter 94: Anastasia's Move to Delhi

The Delhi morning was cloaked in a tentative calm, the October sun casting a soft golden glow over South Delhi's bustling streets, where vendors' shouts mingled with the faint scent of chai and the distant chime of temple bells. It was 10:00 AM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a fragile truce after yesterday's small reconciliation with Priya. She was in the kitchen, humming softly as she prepared breakfast, a flicker of warmth returning after Sunny's help with cooking. Rajinder, however, remained stern, his one-month ultimatum—"Get in line, or you're out"—still a looming threat. Simran had texted Sunny from her room: "Bhai, Mom's humming—that's progress!" Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 5:30 AM: "Sunny, sharing your film idea with your parents? That's so brave! 😊 I told Mom I'm writing poetry for my future, not to defy her—she didn't reply, but she nodded. Your mom's smile is huge! I'm dreaming of moving to Delhi for Holi 2026, not just visiting. What's one thing you'd do to help me settle there?"

Her words, bold and filled with love, sent a rush of exhilaration through Sunny, easing the weight of Rajinder's ultimatum. The dream of Anastasia not just visiting but *moving* to Delhi for Holi 2026—a permanent leap—was a seismic shift, making the 4,000 miles between them feel like a bridge they could cross. Priya's softened demeanor was a small victory, but Rajinder's suspicion and the pressure on their filmmaking grant and savings lingered.

Anastasia's reconciliation attempt with her mother, earning a nod, mirrored his own progress, sparking a resolve to plan her move. Her question about settling in Delhi pushed him to envision a future together.

Sunny typed, heart racing with a mix of excitement and nerves: "Anastasia, moving to Delhi? My heart's soaring! 😄 I'd help you settle by finding a cozy apartment near Hauz Khas, artsy and close to my chai stall. Mom's humming is a win, but Dad's still rigid—says I'm 'testing him.' Your mom's nod is huge—what happened? Let's plan your move on our call tonight, add it to our joint account goals." He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe clutching her poetry book, snow falling as she dreamed of Delhi's chaos. The thought of her living here—blending Russian poetry with Delhi's vibrancy—fueled his courage, despite the storm of parental opposition.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant and savings were lifelines, but Rajinder's deadline and Priya's fragile warmth were a tightrope. Anastasia's bold dream of moving to Delhi was a spark, urging him to plan beyond Holi 2026—a life together. The video call tonight, planning visa steps and now her move, was a chance to make this leap real, even with the threat of being kicked out.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "A Hauz Khas apartment? Sunny, I'm already packing! 😊 Mom's nod was quiet—she's not yelling, but still watches my every move. Your dad's rigidity sounds tough—you're so strong! I'd bring my Russian tea set to make Delhi home. What's one thing you'd do to make our Delhi life ours?" Her words were a beacon, her dream of moving tightening their bond, her question deepening their vision of a shared future.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Your tea set in Delhi? Perfect, Anastasia! 😄 I'd make our life ours by teaching you to cook biryani, our kitchen filled with laughter. Dad's deadline is scary, but Mom's warming up. Let's plan your move—visa, housing—on our call. What's one thing you'd do to make Delhi ours?" Sending it felt like a vow, their dream of Anastasia's move a shield against ultimatums. The Delhi morning hummed outside, Rajinder's threat looming, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026 and beyond. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to plan this bold leap and conquer any distance or opposition.

Chapter 95: New Beginnings

The Delhi afternoon was cloaked in a tentative warmth, the October sun casting a golden glow over South Delhi's bustling streets, where vendors' shouts mingled with the scent of chai and the distant chime of temple bells. It was 4:06 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a fragile bridge between conflict and hope. Priya was in the kitchen, her humming softer but steadier as she prepared an early dinner, a sign of warming after Sunny's help with cooking yesterday. Rajinder, however, remained stern, his one-month ultimatum—"Get in line, or you're out"—still a looming shadow, though he'd been quieter today. Simran had texted Sunny from her room: "Bhai, Mom's humming louder—you're winning her over!" Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 11:36 AM: "Sunny, cooking biryani together? That's our Delhi life! 😊 I'd make it ours by planting a small herb

garden on our balcony—Russian dill, Indian basil. Mom's nod turned into a short talk—she's still mad but listened. Your dad's deadline sounds heavy—what's new? What's one new beginning you'd start with me in Delhi?"

Her words, vibrant and filled with hope, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the weight of Rajinder's ultimatum. The dream of Anastasia moving to Delhi for Holi 2026—cooking biryani, blending their cultures in a shared apartment—felt like a new beginning, making the 4,000 miles between them a bridge they could cross. Priya's warming demeanor was a small victory, but Rajinder's rigidity and the pressure on their filmmaking grant and savings lingered. Anastasia's progress with her mother—a nod turning into a talk—mirrored Sunny's slow reconciliation with Priya, sparking a resolve to plan this new chapter. Her question about a new beginning in Delhi fueled his vision of their life together.

Sunny typed, heart racing with excitement and resolve: "Anastasia, a balcony garden? That's perfect for us! 😄 I'd start a new beginning by enrolling us in a local filmmaking workshop in Delhi, creating together. Mom's humming is a win, but Dad's still cold—says I'm 'testing his patience.' Your mom's talk is huge—what happened? Let's plan your move—visa, apartment—on our call tonight." He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe tending a notebook like it's their future garden, snow falling as she navigated her mother's grudging openness. The thought of their Delhi life—filmmaking, herbs, laughter—strengthened his courage, despite the storm of Rajinder's deadline.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant and savings were lifelines, but Rajinder's ultimatum and Priya's fragile warmth were a tightrope. Anastasia's dream of moving to Delhi was a spark, urging him to envision new beginnings beyond Holi 2026—a shared life. The video call tonight, planning visa steps and housing, was a chance to make this vision real, even with the threat of being kicked out.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "A filmmaking workshop? Sunny, that's our dream! 😊 Mom talked—said I'm 'naive' but asked about my plans. I said I'm building a future, not running—she didn't yell. Your dad's coldness sounds tough—you're so strong! I'd start a new beginning by learning Hindi with you in Delhi. What's one thing you'd do to make our apartment ours?" Her words were a beacon, her progress with her mother tightening their bond, her question deepening their vision of a shared life.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Anastasia, you learning Hindi? I'm in love! 😄 I'd make our apartment ours by hanging a sketch of our Holi reunion on the wall. Mom's warming, but Dad's deadline looms. Let's plan visa documents and apartment budgets tonight. What's one thing you'd say to your mom to keep her listening?" Sending it felt like planting the seeds of their new beginning, their shared dream a shield against ultimatums. The Delhi afternoon hummed outside, Rajinder's threat lingering, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026 and beyond. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to start a new life together, no matter the distance or opposition.

Chapter 96: Blending Worlds

The Delhi evening was cloaked in a fragile warmth, the October sun dipping low, casting a golden glow over South Delhi's bustling streets, where vendors' calls softened into the hum

of evening prayers and the faint scent of jasmine lingered. It was 7:06 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a delicate balance of hope and tension. Priya was in the kitchen, her humming steady as she prepared chai, a sign of her slow warming after Sunny's efforts to connect. Rajinder, however, remained stern, his one-month ultimatum—"Get in line, or you're out"—still a dark cloud, though he'd been quieter today, distracted by work. Simran had texted Sunny from her room: "Bhai, Mom's humming is your win—keep pushing!" Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 2:36 PM: "Sunny, a Holi sketch in our apartment? That's our home! 😊 I'd tell Mom I'm planning a future with someone who inspires me—she's listening, barely. Your dad's deadline sounds brutal—what's new? I'd learn Hindi to blend our worlds in Delhi. What's one way you'd blend our cultures in our apartment?"

Her words, vibrant and filled with love, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the weight of Rajinder's ultimatum. The dream of Anastasia moving to Delhi for Holi 2026—living together in a Hauz Khas apartment, blending Russian and Indian traditions—felt like a vibrant fusion, making the 4,000 miles between them a bridge they could cross. Priya's warming demeanor was a small victory, but Rajinder's rigidity and the pressure on their filmmaking grant and savings lingered. Anastasia's progress with her mother—moving from silence to listening—mirrored Sunny's slow reconciliation with Priya, sparking a resolve to blend their worlds. Her question about their apartment fueled his vision of a shared life.

Sunny typed, heart racing with excitement and resolve: "Anastasia, you learning Hindi? That's our future! 😄 I'd blend our cultures by cooking a fusion meal—Russian borscht with Indian spices—in our apartment. Mom's humming more, but Dad's still cold, says I'm 'defiant.' Your mom's listening is huge—what happened? Let's plan our apartment budget on our call tonight." He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe clutching her poetry book, snow falling as she navigated her mother's cautious openness. The thought of their apartment—filled with sketches, herbs, and fusion flavors—strengthened his courage, despite the storm of Rajinder's deadline.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant and savings were lifelines, but Rajinder's ultimatum and Priya's fragile warmth were a tightrope. Anastasia's dream of moving to Delhi was a spark, urging him to envision a life where their cultures could blend seamlessly. The video call tonight, planning visa steps and their apartment budget, was a chance to make this fusion real, even with the threat of being kicked out.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Borscht with Indian spices? Sunny, I'm hungry for our life! 😊 Mom listened—asked about my 'inspiration,' didn't yell. I said it's someone who makes me dream bigger. Your dad's coldness sounds tough—you're so strong! I'd blend our worlds with a playlist—Russian folk and Bollywood in our apartment. What's one way you'd make our Delhi life feel like home?" Her words were a beacon, her progress with her mother tightening their bond, her question deepening their vision of a blended life.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Anastasia, your playlist idea is perfect! 😄 I'd make our Delhi life home by hanging a Russian icon and an Indian diya on our wall, blending our spirits. Mom's warming, but Dad's deadline looms. Let's plan visa documents and apartment decor

tonight. What's one thing you'd say to your mom to keep her open?" Sending it felt like weaving their worlds closer, their blended dream a shield against ultimatums. The Delhi evening hummed outside, Rajinder's threat lingering, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026 and beyond. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to blend their worlds and conquer any distance or opposition.

Chapter 97: Trials Overcome

The Delhi night was cloaked in a fragile calm, the October air carrying a gentle chill as South Delhi's streets quieted, the hum of distant scooters blending with the soft glow of streetlights and the faint scent of jasmine drifting through the air. It was 9:00 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a delicate balance of hope and tension. Priya was in the living room, her humming softer but present as she folded laundry, a sign of her gradual warming toward Sunny after his efforts to connect. Rajinder, however, remained stern, his one-month ultimatum—"Get in line, or you're out"—still a looming threat, though he'd been quieter today, buried in work. Simran had texted Sunny from her room: "Bhai, Mom's humming is your victory—don't stop now!" Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 4:30 PM: "Sunny, a Russian icon and Indian diya? That's our home! 😊 I told Mom my inspiration is someone who shares my dreams—she asked questions, didn't yell. Your dad's deadline sounds heavy—what's new? I'd blend our worlds with Russian tea and Indian chai in our apartment. What's one trial we've overcome that makes you believe in our Holi 2026 dream?"

Her words, vibrant and filled with hope, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the weight of Rajinder's ultimatum. The dream of Anastasia moving to Delhi for Holi 2026—living in a Hauz Khas apartment, blending Russian tea with Indian chai—felt like a triumph waiting to unfold, making the 4,000 miles between them a bridge they could cross. Priya's warming demeanor was a small victory, but Rajinder's rigidity and the pressure on their filmmaking grant and savings lingered. Anastasia's progress with her mother—moving from silence to questions—mirrored Sunny's slow reconciliation with Priya, sparking a resolve to reflect on their trials overcome. Her question about their shared strength fueled his belief in their future.

Sunny typed, heart racing with gratitude and resolve: "Anastasia, Russian tea and chai? That's our life! 😄 One trial we've overcome? Facing our parents' ultimatums—you with your mom's fury, me with Dad's threat to kick me out. We're still here, planning. Mom's humming more, but Dad's still cold—says I'm 'stubborn.' Your mom's questions are huge—what happened? Let's plan our apartment decor on our call tonight." He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe sipping tea as she answered her mother's questions, snow falling outside. The thought of their trials—parental opposition, financial hurdles, visa fears—strengthened his belief in their Holi 2026 dream, despite Rajinder's looming deadline.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant and savings were lifelines, but Rajinder's ultimatum and Priya's fragile warmth were a tightrope. Anastasia's progress with her mother was a spark, urging him to see their resilience as proof they could overcome any obstacle. The video call tonight, planning visa steps and apartment decor, was a chance to celebrate their victories and push forward.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, our parents' ultimatums? We're stronger than them! 😊 Mom asked about my 'dreams'—I said they're about creating, not running away. She didn't agree, but listened. Your dad's coldness sounds tough—you're my hero! Another trial? Keeping our bond strong across 4,000 miles. What's one way you'd celebrate our trials overcome in Delhi?" Her words were a beacon, her progress with her mother tightening their bond, her question deepening their shared resolve.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Anastasia, your mom listening? That's a win! 😄 I'd celebrate our trials by taking you to Qutub Minar—standing tall like us, sharing a story under its shadow. Dad's deadline looms, but Mom's warming. Let's plan our visa timeline tonight. What's one way you'd celebrate in Saint Petersburg?" Sending it felt like honoring their strength, their trials overcome a shield against ultimatums. The Delhi night hummed outside, Rajinder's threat lingering, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to overcome any trial and build a blended future.

Chapter 98: Eternal Vows

The Delhi night was cloaked in a fragile stillness, the October air carrying a gentle chill as South Delhi's streets settled into a soft hum of distant traffic and the faint scent of jasmine drifting through the open window. It was 11:00 PM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a delicate balance of hope and tension. Priya was asleep, her earlier humming a faint echo of reconciliation after Sunny's efforts to connect, while Rajinder remained in his study, his one-month ultimatum—"Get in line, or you're out"—still a looming shadow, though his silence today hinted at a slight thaw. Simran had texted Sunny from her room: "Bhai, you're building something eternal—keep fighting!" Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 6:30 PM: "Sunny, Qutub Minar to celebrate our trials? That's so us! 😊 I'd celebrate in Saint Petersburg by taking you to the Hermitage, sharing a story in its halls. Mom asked more about my dreams—didn't yell, just listened. Your dad's deadline sounds heavy—what's new? What's one eternal vow we'd make for our Holi 2026 life?"

Her words, radiant and filled with love, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the weight of Rajinder's ultimatum. The dream of Anastasia moving to Delhi for Holi 2026—living together, blending their worlds in a Hauz Khas apartment—felt like an eternal promise, making the 4,000 miles between them a bridge they could cross. Priya's warming demeanor was a small victory, but Rajinder's rigidity and the pressure on their filmmaking grant and savings lingered. Anastasia's progress with her mother—moving from questions to listening—mirrored Sunny's slow reconciliation with Priya, sparking a resolve to make an eternal vow. Her question about their vow fueled his vision of a forever commitment.

Sunny typed, heart racing with gratitude and resolve: "Anastasia, the Hermitage with you? That's our story! 😄 My eternal vow: to build a life with you in Delhi, creating art and love, no matter the odds. Mom's humming more, but Dad's still cold—says I'm 'disrespectful.' Your mom's listening is huge—what happened? Let's plan our visa timeline and apartment decor on our call tonight." He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe wandering her snowy streets, dreaming of their shared future as her mother softened. The thought of their

eternal vow—blending Russian poetry and Indian art—strengthened his courage, despite the storm of Rajinder's deadline.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant and savings were lifelines, but Rajinder's ultimatum and Priya's fragile warmth were a tightrope. Anastasia's progress with her mother was a spark, urging him to see their shared trials—parental opposition, distance, visa fears—as proof of their unbreakable bond. The video call tonight, planning their visa and apartment, was a chance to cement their eternal vow, a promise to overcome any obstacle.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, a life of art and love? That's my vow too! 😊 Mom asked about my 'future'—I said it's with someone who shares my soul. She didn't fight, just nodded. Your dad's coldness sounds tough—you're so strong! My eternal vow: to stand by you, blending our worlds forever. What's one way we'd seal our vow in Delhi?" Her words were a beacon, her mother's nod tightening their bond, her question deepening their vision of an eternal commitment.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Anastasia, you standing by me forever? My heart's yours! 😄 We'd seal our vow in Delhi by lighting a diya and a Russian candle together at Humayun's Tomb, promising eternity. Dad's deadline looms, but Mom's warming. Let's plan our apartment budget tonight. What's one way we'd seal our vow in Saint Petersburg?" Sending it felt like forging an unbreakable promise, their eternal vow a shield against ultimatums. The Delhi night hummed outside, Rajinder's threat lingering, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026 and beyond. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to make their eternal vows a reality, no matter the distance or opposition.

Chapter 99: Love Beyond Borders

The Delhi morning was cloaked in a fragile dawn, the October sun casting a soft golden glow over South Delhi's bustling streets, where the early calls of vendors mingled with the faint scent of chai and the distant chime of temple bells. It was 6:30 AM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a quiet battleground, the tension of Rajinder's one-month ultimatum—"Get in line, or you're out"—still lingering, though softened by Priya's gradual warming. She was in the kitchen, her humming a gentle undercurrent as she prepared breakfast, a sign of hope after Sunny's efforts to connect. Rajinder was still asleep, his stern resolve momentarily at rest. Simran had texted Sunny late last night: "Bhai, Mom's humming is your bridge—keep building!" Sunny sat at his desk, the fan's creak a steady rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia's latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 2:00 AM: "Sunny, a diya and candle at Humayun's Tomb? That's our eternity! 😊 I'd seal our vow in Saint Petersburg by dancing together under the northern lights, promising forever. Mom's nodding more—she asked about my 'soulmate' today. Your dad's deadline sounds heavy—what's new? What's one way our love transcends borders for Holi 2026?"

Her words, radiant and filled with love, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the weight of Rajinder's ultimatum. The dream of Anastasia moving to Delhi for Holi 2026—living together, blending their worlds in a Hauz Khas apartment—felt like a love that could transcend any border, making the 4,000 miles between them a bridge they were destined to cross. Priya's warming demeanor was a small victory, but Rajinder's rigidity and the pressure on their

filmmaking grant and savings lingered. Anastasia's progress with her mother—moving from listening to asking about her 'soulmate'—mirrored Sunny's slow reconciliation with Priya, sparking a resolve to celebrate their love's boundless nature. Heradies question about transcending borders fueled his vision of their unbreakable bond.

Sunny typed, heart racing with gratitude and resolve: "Anastasia, dancing under the northern lights? That's our forever! 😄 Our love transcends borders through our film-poem—your Russian verses, my Delhi sketches, uniting us for Holi 2026. Mom's humming more, but Dad's still cold—called me 'selfish' yesterday. Your mom's questions are huge—what happened? Let's plan our apartment budget and visa timeline on our call today." He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe awake in the early hours, dreaming of their dance as her mother softened. The thought of their film-poem—a fusion of their cultures—strengthened his courage, despite the storm of Rajinder's deadline.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan's hum blending with his thoughts. The grant and savings were lifelines, but Rajinder's ultimatum and Priya's fragile warmth were a tightrope. Anastasia's progress with her mother was a spark, urging him to see their love as a force beyond borders—parental opposition, distance, or visa hurdles. The video call today, planning their apartment and visa, was a chance to solidify their eternal vow, a testament to their boundless love.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia's reply: "Sunny, our film-poem uniting us? That's our love beyond borders! 😊 Mom asked who my 'soulmate' is—I said someone who makes my heart sing, and she didn't argue. Your dad's coldness sounds tough—you're so strong! Our love transcends borders by dreaming together, no matter the miles. What's one way we'd celebrate our love in Delhi?" Her words were a beacon, her mother's softening tightening their bond, her question deepening their vision of a boundless future.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: "Anastasia, your heart singing? That's me! 😄 We'd celebrate our love in Delhi by watching the sunrise at Lotus Temple, vowing to never let borders stop us. Dad's deadline looms, but Mom's warming. Let's plan our joint account deposits today. What's one way we'd celebrate in Saint Petersburg?" Sending it felt like a vow to transcend all obstacles, their love beyond borders a shield against ultimatums. The Delhi morning hummed outside, Rajinder's threat lingering, but Anastasia's words were a light, guiding him to Holi 2026 and beyond. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to conquer any distance or opposition.

Chapter 100: A Transformed Life

The Delhi morning was cloaked in a radiant dawn, the October sun casting a vibrant golden glow over South Delhi's bustling streets, where vendors' shouts mingled with the rich scent of brewing chai and the cheerful chime of temple bells. It was 7:30 AM, October 12, 2025, and the Singh household was a fragile bridge of hope and tension, transformed by small victories amidst Rajinder's lingering one-month ultimatum—"Get in line, or you're out." Priya was in the kitchen, her humming brighter as she prepared parathas, a sign of her growing warmth after Sunny's heartfelt talk yesterday, where he shared his filmmaking passion without mentioning Anastasia. Rajinder, sipping chai at the dining table, was quieter, his stern resolve softening slightly after Priya's gentle urging to "hear our son." Simran had

texted Sunny: “Bhai, Mom’s humming is your magic—Dad’s next!” Sunny sat at his desk, the fan’s creak a hopeful rhythm, his phone glowing with Anastasia’s latest message from Saint Petersburg, where it was 3:00 AM: “Sunny, sunrise at Lotus Temple? That’s our love! 😊 I’d celebrate in Saint Petersburg by skating with you on a frozen canal, vowing forever. Mom asked about my ‘soulmate’ again—said she wants to understand. Your dad’s deadline sounds heavy—what’s new? What’s one way our love has transformed your life for Holi 2026?”

Her words, radiant and filled with love, were a lifeline, pulling Sunny from the shadow of Rajinder’s ultimatum. The dream of Anastasia moving to Delhi for Holi 2026—living together in a Hauz Khas apartment, blending their worlds—felt like a transformed life, making the 4,000 miles between them a bridge they were destined to cross. Priya’s warmth and Rajinder’s slight thaw were victories, but the ultimatum and pressure on their filmmaking grant and savings lingered. Anastasia’s progress with her mother—moving to a desire to understand—mirrored Sunny’s slow reconciliation, sparking a resolve to reflect on how their love had changed him. Her question about transformation fueled his vision of a life reshaped by their bond.

Sunny typed, heart racing with gratitude and resolve: “Anastasia, skating on a frozen canal? That’s our forever! 😄 Our love’s transformed me by giving me courage—facing Dad’s ultimatum, dreaming bigger than Neha’s path. Mom’s warming, Dad’s quieter—said I’m ‘stubborn but driven.’ Your mom’s openness is huge—what happened? Let’s plan our joint account deposits and visa timeline on our call today.” He hit send, picturing her in Saint Petersburg, maybe awake in the early hours, dreaming of their vows as her mother softened. The thought of their love—fueling his defiance, shaping his dreams—strengthened his courage, despite the storm of Rajinder’s deadline.

As he waited, Sunny leaned back, the fan’s hum blending with his thoughts. The grant and savings were lifelines, but Rajinder’s ultimatum and Priya’s fragile warmth were a tightrope. Anastasia’s progress with her mother was a spark, urging him to see how their love had transformed him—from a son bound by duty to a man fighting for his own path. The video call today, planning their joint account and visa, was a chance to build on this transformation, a testament to their boundless love.

His phone buzzed. Anastasia’s reply: “Sunny, courage from our love? You’re my inspiration! 😊 Our love’s transformed me by making me fearless—telling Mom about my soulmate, planning to move. Mom said she’ll ‘think about’ my choices—huge step! Your dad’s softening sounds hopeful—you’re amazing! Our love’s transformed us for Holi 2026—how would you celebrate this in Delhi?” Her words were a beacon, her mother’s openness tightening their bond, her question deepening their vision of a transformed life.

Sunny typed, resolve surging: “Anastasia, you fearless? That’s everything! 😄 I’d celebrate our transformation in Delhi by hosting a small Holi party in our apartment—colors, Russian tea, our vows. Dad’s deadline looms, but Mom’s warmth grows. Let’s plan our visa documents today. How’d you celebrate our transformation in Saint Petersburg?” Sending it felt like embracing their transformed lives, their love a shield against ultimatums. The Delhi morning hummed outside, Rajinder’s threat lingering, but Anastasia’s words were a light,

guiding him to Holi 2026 and beyond. As he awaited her reply, their love felt like a promise, strong enough to transform their lives and conquer any distance or opposition.

conclusion

The story culminates in a testament to love’s resilience—Sunny and Anastasia, separated by cultures and continents, fight to preserve their connection through every adversity. Their journey is marked by courage: standing up to family expectations, navigating disappointing ultimatums, and forging dreams together despite doubts and practical obstacles. Through shared language, creative collaboration, and repeated acts of defiance and compromise, they build an emotional bridge and nurture a vision of unity and mutual respect.As external pressures mount—from family obligations to financial struggles—each character finds strength in the other. Their bond weathers arguments, misunderstandings, and homesickness; together, they choose patience and forge new beginnings, promising that distance and tradition will not destroy their aspirations. Their story’s conclusion is not defined by a specific outcome, but by the vows they make: to persist in hope, celebrate cultural fusion, and build a future on their terms, whatever trials they face. This ending affirms that love—when paired with authenticity and resolve—can transform lives, enabling courageous steps toward personal growth, creative fulfillment, and hard-won reconciliation across divides.